Preface

The Larsen Legacy Volume 5: 1996-1997 "Moving On," is a compilation of letters written by Dad and me to you children as well as to grandparents. During those years family members were scattered far and wide, and these weekly missives kept us informed and connected as well as conveying encouragement, counsel, and loving concern.

The years '96 and '97 saw high school and college graduations celebrated, college studies continued, marriages solemnized, jobs secured, moves made, babies born, grandchildren hugged, missions served, and daily nurturing of Larsen siblings despite their dwindling numbers. And in the midst of all this frenetic activity, one must not forget that there were prayers ascending, preparations a'plenty, midnight oil burned, finances grappled with, and some disappointments and trials along the way.

This book is another chapter in the continuing account of our growing family. Its stories are told from a parental perspective. And although every effort has been made to give as accurate an account as possible, they may not portray the events as you children recall them. But, hopefully these writings will give you cause to reflect on years gone by and to remember the fun (?) we had as we wended our way together.

This book is a testament to the loving kindness of an ever-watchful Father who answers prayers, guides, protects, and strengthens us, and gives blessings in abundance in response to the "righteous desires of our hearts."

Mom

Dedication

Dedicated to my sweet children and their amazing spouses. For their understanding hearts and quiet patience while life swirled around us all at a dizzying pace. For their exemplary strivings that made possible their remarkable accomplishments. To the couples, who despite the rigors of their own schedules, took time to show concern and kindness to younger siblings, engendering unity and love. To younger siblings who carried on the tradition of excellence and rejoiced in the kinship and inspiration found in familial relationships. To all these I pay tribute and dedicate this latest volume.

Acknowledgements

To Stephen for his continuing help with computer questions and frustrations and to John who cheerfully added this project to all his other pursuits that keep him on the run. To each family member who has provided photos and photo albums, and to Stephani for her encouragement and efforts to keep our family members close and almost always smiling!

The Larsen Legacy

Volume 5: 1996-1997

Moving On

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January 2, 1996

[Mom] Happy New Year! The kids left this morning for school and life resumes again! I have thoroughly enjoyed the holidays, especially having time with the college kids and the break from church responsibilities. It was a thrill to present the Christmas story in music on the 24th to the ward and to feel the Christmas spirit. I had so many positive responses from ward members! I love the choir members and recognize the sacrifices they make to be in the choir. It's always a challenge to begin a new year when we have been on a spiritual high for the past months preparing the beautiful Christmas music.

Here's a rundown of everyone's activities.

Grandpa and Grandma Larsen are leaving Thursday for their last session of the State Legislature. They will be renting a place and AlvaLu will continue with her family history work while Grandpa serves his final term. I am so proud of him for his many tireless years of service in the political arena and grateful for the influence he's had on the policies and laws governing our state! He will be missed by his many associates.

Grandpa and Grandma Richards are moving into their new home after the final inspection is completed. Grandpa has been struggling with his health and sometimes doesn't have the strength to move about. His doctor is putting him on some medication that should help. It's hard to see all that needs to be done and not be able to do it.

Steph and Linds are on the final leg of mission "Doctorate". They continue to house-hunt with their online San Jose newspaper and are making plans for their return. They hosted Randy and Shauntel over the holidays.

Shauntel and Randy are back in Iowa and ready for a new semester. The curriculum for Randy's classes is more "hands on" this semester. Shauntel is scheduled for minor surgery this Friday to correct some problems and prepare the way for the upcoming procedures. She hopes to return to school Monday.

Jonie is returning to Minneapolis to continue her coursework. Christmas gave her and her family some good rest and relaxation time.

Steve and Bonnie spent yesterday moving to Murray. They lined up several friends to help them load the U-Haul and then John and Chris (Laurie's husband) did the unloading at the new apartment. Steve starts his new job next Monday and will have the week to settle in.

David and Andrea made a trip to San Diego to attend the wedding of a Vietnamese friend. When I asked David how they got along, he asked me if I had ever spent five hours with two tired, wiggly pre-schoolers at a 15-course wedding dinner in a crowded room? I hadn't done that but had some similar experiences that left me swearing off ever going anywhere again until the kids were 18 years old. Aside from that, they had a nice holiday, enjoyed the brief respite from school, and are looking ahead to May 8th with anticipation! (Graduation day)

Becky returned last Thursday to work at the MTC. She will be student teaching at Canyon View Jr. High. She was hoping to draw this assignment since she has scheduled to supervise a night shift at the telecenter at the MTC for the next semester.

John left Monday to help Steve move and to work for Chad making counter tops. He and Mike worked the week before Christmas and got paid enough to buy books and supplies for the new semester. John is planning to interview for Steve's job at the hospital and to work there the next

few years. The morning that he left, I opened the fridge and commented that he hadn't quite eaten all the food in the house. He apologized and said that he had done his best!

Mike is still here with us and will be returning Saturday. He has enjoyed sleeping in and visiting with family and friends. Three of his friends had mission farewells Sunday. He can't submit his papers until Feb. 1st. He spent considerable time telling us of his escapades including the day he painted his face blue with a big white Y down the front and over the nose and went to a BYU football game. He even has the pictures to prove it. I can't figure out how he had time for all this nonsense and still managed to keep his grades up but somehow, he did.

Paul and I are in the thick of scholarships and college decisions. I called Ricks College this morning to make sure that everything was in order. Usually students with Paul's credentials are notified early and encouraged to finalize their plans. Some people told Paul that even though he is on a waiting list at Heritage Halls, he should assume that he gets in. But the tuition money is a big item in this decision and if Ricks will give him full tuition, that is the direction we are encouraging him to go.

Tim spent much of his holiday at the church playing ball with a variety of groups. He must be on some kind of a call list because invariably 2-3 different groups call each day. When he left this morning at six for ball practice I commented that he didn't have to worry about getting out of shape over the holidays.

Sara Kay had a wonderful Christmas but was excited for kindergarten today. It pleases me how much she enjoys her siblings.

Daddy and I spent time shopping for new living room furniture and refinishing old furniture for our dining room. I am debating about what chair to get and Bishop Moon has been patient and will deliver different ones until I make a final selection.

As of this writing, Steve and Bonnie and John are the ones confident of their whereabouts in June. When others know their schedules, we can do more planning for the reunion. We will be in Provo in April for Steve and Becky's graduations, Tempe, Arizona in May for David's, here for Paul's the first week in June, and we want to help Steph and Linds move in July. Other factors such as fellowships, Randy's med school boards, and Mike's departure are up in the air for now.

January 8, 1996

[Mom] Stephani called and said that they were experiencing extremely cold and wintery weather. They had three days of snow closure and a "snow alert" that meant if you were out on the roads for anything but emergency purposes, you would be ticketed. Sounds more like Idaho than Indiana.

Mike left Friday afternoon for Provo. Becky has orientation today. John returned to interview with the hospital and work for Chad. He also spent time with Marla. She is a girl from Nephi, Utah and a close friend of Becky's. She is seventh of 12 children.

Mike returned for his final semester at the "Y". His favorite roommate is en route to Chile on a mission so this semester won't be as fun as last. He will come home the end of January for his final interview and to submit his papers.

Shauntel had her surgery Friday and is doing well. The doctors were encouraging and optimistic. Randy has been taking good care of her. Today his classwork starts so she was grateful that she was feeling better.

Steve starts his new job today. When he

called Saturday, he said that the sound in the background was their new washer and dryer! I still remember the day we bought our first washer and dryer. That is a red-letter day!

David and Andrea are in the thick of apps for fellowships. I can empathize since I am working on several scholarship apps myself. David said that his mission experience and foreign language skills have really been an asset. That is just one of the blessings of missionary service.

Tim had two games last week and another tonight. Mike was able to go to them; that meant a lot. Paul had two games Saturday and has four this week. It's fun to attend as a family. I 'm grateful that basketball has been a part of our family tradition.

I was thinking the other day how much I enjoy holidays. Aside from the activities associated with these days, there's time for focusing on the purpose of the celebration. Maybe if there weren't holidays, I wouldn't take the time to appreciate the wonderful things that make my life so rich and meaningful.

Daddy and I have talked about the goals we would like to reach in '96. Hopefully each of you are able to do the same and recommit yourselves to righteous endeavors.

[Dad] I, too, am grateful for the holidays and especially for Christmas and New Year's. With the focus on what really is important—the Savior and giving to others—Christmas helps us to get outside ourselves. From that vantage point New Year's resolutions and thinking about what the future years may bring are much more meaningful and directed. This holiday season was a rich and rewarding one for me as I enjoyed having family home. I am so grateful for the good lives you are living.

I have been excited for our redecorating. The living room is beautiful and it's relaxing to sit in there and read or have scripture time. It's been gratifying to strip and sand several pieces of furniture and prepare them for painting to help finish off the family room. It really gives me a feeling of worth to meet challenges and to solve problems.

I also appreciated the family rallying to help with my projects, viz. "Trails" and the "Be Prepared" mailing. Mike went with me last Wednesday and helped all day. It was good for me to have a one-on-one visit with him, and not so good to have him witness me getting a ticket as we speeded to Tim's game in Bear Lake.

January 15, 1996

[Mom]When Grandpa and Grandma Richards moved to Richland, Maureen recommended a doctor for Grandpa. He was uncertain about going when he learned that the doctor was a "she." It only took one appointment for him to be convinced. Since that first appointment, this doctor has continued to run tests. Several weeks ago she told Grandpa that she wondered if he had Parkinson's or if he had an inflammatory blood disease that has similar symptoms. She scheduled an MRI and has continued to research his condition.

In a recent medical journal there was an article about "Parkinsonism's", or diseases that have all the traits of regular Parkinson's but are not actually the disease. These other diseases can be treated if diagnosed. This may be what Grandpa is dealing with. If so, proper treatment could give him back his movement and energy. This is wonderful news but Uncle Charles has cautioned Grandpa not to get his hopes up.

Grandpa and Grandma moved into their new home and are nearly settled. Uncle Nate has put in a lot of hours helping them

get moved.

We had the usual ball-busy weekend. Our ward team does a good job but they just can't pull off a win. Paul had some good games and made his share of the points.

Tim competed in a sure-shot competition and took second place out of five in his age group. He has two school games this week and continues to be the starting point guard. But, he can't seem to make his shots. He makes them in practice but can't hit anything during the game. I challenged him last week to make 1 point and he did it. I am going to try a similar tactic this week and see if we can't get him doing better.

This past week I talked with the Utah bunch and each of them mentioned Marla, the girl John is dating. I can hardly wait to meet her! She is coming home the last weekend in January when John brings Mike home for his final mission interviews. I still remember my "first meeting" with each of our son and daughter-in-laws. It's a rather awesome thought to have someone walk through the front door and recognize that this person is someone who might be an important part of your life for eternity. Wow! (It's really shocking when they are dressed in cowboy boots, hats, and greet you with, "Howdy, partner!) Anyway, with Marla being from southern Utah maybe the shock will not be so great!

Sometimes my life is like an algebraic equation. I try to get the knowns on one side and isolate the unknowns and then solve the problem. We have a lot of unknowns right now in our family's schedule and I want to start putting in some knowns. Mike is anxious for his part of the equation to be solved. He feels his anxiety will be reduced when he finally gets his call and departure date.

Becky is wondering where she will be teaching and working this summer. Steph and Linds are wondering when housing will come available in California and what that will do to their moving schedule. The list goes on. I'm trying to stay calm. (which is not an easy task for me, as most of you know.)

[Dad] I hope you appreciate the commitment of your mother in keeping these weekly epistles emanating from Larsen headquarters in Moreland. The years of weekly letters, rarely missing a beat, stand like the Washington monument obelisk witnessing of her love and devotion.

Last Saturday night we received a phone call from my dad. It was a real treat and surprise. The older I get the more I cherish these visits.

We are responding to our new stake president's challenge to be a Millennial family, and to be worthy to stand at the Second Coming. We have restarted our family scripture reading on Sunday night. We are trying to make a difference in our spheres of influence.

I never regret the past with its struggles and financial duress. Especially when I recount what each of you are doing. I thank Heavenly Father for his bounteous blessings and pray that we will continue to be worthy for the peace and happiness that fills our lives. Stay close, follow the prophet, prepare, study the scriptures, be grateful and know as I do that He lives and blesses us abundantly. P.S. "Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it."—Helen Keller

"The greatest pleasure I know is to do a good action by stealth, and to have it found out by accident."—Charles Lamb

January 21, 1996

[Dad] "Those who think they have not time for bodily exercise will sooner or later have to find time for illness." -Edward Stanley

"Reform must come from within, not from without. You cannot legislate for virtue." - James Cardinal Gibbons

"The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and deeds left undone." -Harriet Beecher Stowe

The most exciting event of this past week was Daddy Day at Kindergarten. When we arrived, we went into the gym (Moreland Elementary) where they had a large semicircle of benches set up and each child had drawn a picture of their dad and a poster was made up for the VIP's showing where each one was to sit.

The kids then came in and sang a couple of songs and said a poem and then did a barn dance. Then the fathers got up and joined their children in doing the barn dance. After that, we had to finish off a clown face by coloring, cutting out, and pasting on hair, hat, eyes, nose, mouth. It was an interesting feat to work with our kindergartener to accomplish that task—but our clown face was absolutely superb!

The next activity was gummy dinosaur bingo with letters and then with numbers and we got to eat the pieces after the game was over. I'm glad Sam wasn't there to see all those dinosaurs eaten or he would have been sad.

The final activity was refreshments of donuts and ice cream floats made with Dad's Root Beer. It was such a delight to share that experience with SaraKay and to see how well she is doing in her class. She's like the rest of you—a real standout!

The next most exciting thing was going to a couple of District Scouter Recognition Dinners with your mother. On Thursday night we went to Soda Springs with Brad and Danzelle Allen and had a delightful trip and visit with them. They are just a few years behind us with their family—their oldest is at Ricks and their second will graduate this year, and their youngest is just a year ahead of SaraKay.

On Saturday night we went to the Blackfoot District Dinner and I was surprised to receive the "Explorer Leader of the Year" award. We helped with the setup, takedown, and the sound system. It was a wonderful dinner and opportunity to recognize outstanding leaders. Bill Hammond and Michael Kneese were two that received the District Award of Merit and were honored. They have given so much to the community and to young people that I was especially proud to see them recognized by their peers.

Another major activity of the week was ball games. CBA & 9th grade games are a significant part of each week's activities. On Friday night the 9th grade, the JV and the Varsity all played American Falls here. After Tim's game we came home for supper and then Tim and I went back for the last of the JV game and the Varsity game. SR won all three.

Tim's team is pulling together and doing well. Saturday our ward team was the only one to have enough there so we split up and scrimmaged. Paul does well, but he was tired from a late-night skiing date and not at his best.

[Mom] Last week Daddy and I received an invitation to an open house for Everett Dayton who is retiring this month. He was the social worker whom we worked with to get Jonie. Daddy is attending the open house and I have written a letter telling him about Jonie. He will be pleased to get an update on one of his favorite Placement students. She is our favorite student and I told him that we keep in touch. The invitation and letter have given me cause to reflect upon those busy days when the nest was full and you were all small.

Today doing dishes I commented that Sara Kay's antics were getting a little irritating and Tim suggested that maybe I could run away like I did that one time out on the

desert. You older children will remember. I got mad at all of you and left the house, got in the van and drove off down the road with Becky running along behind yelling, "Come back, Mama! We promise to be good!" Tim asked me if Becky really did run along yelling as I drove away and I had to admit I didn't even remember doing that but so many of you have retold that story that I assume it happened.

Grandma called yesterday and told me that Grandpa Richards was in the hospital for tests and to receive steroid injections. He fell one night trying to get out of bed. His strength is failing and the doctors are convinced that he is dealing with something besides Parkinson's. They decided to try steroids to build up his strength and then they will run more tests.

They have decided that he is allergic to gluten and are putting him on a special diet. When I called the hospital to visit with him he commented that his only regret about this is that now he can't play for the NFL or NCAA. Sounds like his sense of humor is still functioning. Remember him in your prayers.

January 29, 1996

[Mom] This past weekend was a memorable one. Mike and John came from Provo so that Mike could finish off his mission interviews and get his papers on their way. John offered to bring Mike since he had some reasons of his own to come home. He has been dating Marla regularly and invited her to come for the weekend. Mike's roommate, Ron Fuller, also came as did John's roommate, Kyle Bradford. Kyle trained John as mission secretary and they have been good friends ever since.

The group arrived Friday evening about nine and left Sunday afternoon. I had been concerned all week about them coming because of the stormy weather. Last week was so bad that we had a day and a half of school closure. We enjoyed visiting Friday night and about 11:00 p.m. most of the bunch bundled up and went out into the snowy night to play in Tim's snow tunnel. We have had so much snow that the canal was totally filled in. It was fun for Dad and me to visit with John and Marla. Marla is certainly a lovely young woman and we can see why John is so smitten with her.

We went to bed about midnight but the party continued downstairs until the wee hours. Saturday morning, we all went to Paul's church game only to find that the opposing team didn't show so Nolan Furniss let the Larsen's play the Moreland 6th team. Marla, Kyle, and Ron did a good job of helping John, Mike, and Paul on the team. Maybe I should say John, Mike and Paul helped Ron, Marla, and Kyle. Anyway, it was a fun game.

Saturday afternoon a storm settled in and Tim's game and Paul's date dance were all cancelled. Everyone seemed content to do homework and visit and Kyle played some hymn variations on the piano. He has such a beautiful touch and even played an original composition.

After supper the whole group headed out to the canal again. The storm was raging and had formed five-foot drifts across the back yard and at the side of the house. Before they went to the canal, they demolished most of the drifts. The next morning, the drifts were back so much snow had blown in overnight. Today those same drifts have nearly buried the trampoline and are about 6 feet high.

By late Saturday night we knew that we would not be having our meetings the next day so Daddy planned a lesson and program. Sunday morning, we called President Shipley to see about Mike's interview and his wife said he was out shoveling snow and trying to get out of the driveway. She said he was considering making house calls on his snowmobile.

Soon Bishop Godfrey called and said that Pres. Shipley wanted Mike at the stake center at 10:15, so he and Daddy left for that.

In the meantime, the rest of the bunch got packed up and ready to make a hasty exit if the weather permitted. Bishop Godfrey suggested they wait until today (Monday) but we were hesitant to have them miss school and work.

When Daddy and Mike returned home, we had our family meeting. Daddy had prepared some word strips with ideas from a handout Bishop Godfrey had given him a few weeks ago. Each of us had an opportunity to respond. Paul and Kyle handled the music. It was a sweet experience. I couldn't help thinking how fortunate we were to be safe and warm and to have shared such a special weekend together. The snow storm insulated us from outside concerns and we relaxed and enjoyed the chance to be together.

One of my favorite times was Saturday night when we started singing hymns. With so many singers, we really had fun switching parts and even singing a Capella. We started about 10:30 and didn't finish until after midnight. What fun!

After dinner Sunday the kids left and made it out to the highway and interstate. From there it was smooth sailing to Provo. Last night the storm set in again and we have been out for closure today and will be out tomorrow. Wednesday another storm is due in.

Tonight for home evening Sara Kay asked if she could play a song for us: "Cuckoo" from Suzuki. Some of you will remember it. As she played Tim chimed in, "Cuckoo, cuckoo, I'm going cuckoo." Well those weren't the correct words but it kind of sums up what a lot of mothers are thinking right now with two more days ahead of snow closure and no break in sight.

Last night when I went to bed I lie awake thinking what a blessing it was for the weather to break long enough for them to get home. I had a phrase from 1 Nephi 4 come to my mind. Nephi is trying to convince his brothers that they can do what the Lord asks of them and he is using Moses and the exodus as the example of the Lord's sustaining his people in times of need. He concluded by saying, "and our fathers came through on dry ground." I had wondered if the kids would run into problems on their return trip. Apparently once they got on 1-15 they traveled on dry ground the rest of the way. What a relief and blessing.

P. S Grandpa Richards is home and doing much better. He's on new medication. Hopefully he will be well enough to go with Nate and Maureen and Mom to Hawaii the middle of February. Maureen 's parents are on a mission there.

[Dad] It really was a sweet weekend and it was nice to have our new furniture in place. We were able to get 11 around our new table. I will echo how impressed we were with our guests and the spirit they brought with them. Marla would certainly be easy to love and assimilate into our family

I have been sick with a cold so I didn't sing much while our company was here. I am going to the doctor today to get some relief.

Much of the past week has been focused on year-end reviews and asking consideration in changing my job classification with BSA from finance executive to endowment director. I feel good about what I have been able to accomplish while with the Scouts and my resume shows up quite well.

February 5, 1996

[Dad] One of the biggest events of last week was the first staff development overnighter for a new Wood Badge course. I am involved with a lot of new people and

it's going to be a great experience. My role isn't going to be as intense as last year, but it is going to be a lot of hard work just the same. I will be an assistant quartermaster responsible for all the equipment, food, etc. for the staff and participants. We have a staff of 16 and hope to get a full course of between 50 and 60 participants.

This next week is going to be a busy one—Paul, Tim and I are singing with some other Eagles and their Dads for a special musical number in sacrament meeting next week for Scout Sunday; we are also singing at the Council Eagle Court of Honor that night, so we have a lot of practicing to do. Then we are heading to Salt Lake Friday after Tim's game at Marsh Valley for a Scouting dinner. We are filling our agenda so that we can see family while we are there: time with the Provo bunch and Steve & Bonnie in Salt Lake.

[Mom] Today as Daddy headed out the door, I reminded him of his winter coat that was still hanging in the closet. He has had such a terrible cold that I have been cautious about him dressing appropriately for the weather. He made the comment, "I don't need a coat; it's spring out there!" Compared to last week's -25-degree weather, today was warm, but not THAT warm.

We had snow closure Monday and Tuesday because of the blizzard conditions and then again on Friday because of the extreme cold. It was nice to send the kids off to school today and look forward to a full week of classes. Of course, Tim thinks differently, but Sara Kay hates missing kindergarten and is always anxious to get back.

The first week in January I spent several hours at the music library picking choir music. I had the topics for our meetings and it felt wonderful knowing what we were performing and when. Yesterday we met for practice and in the first few minutes I learned that because we missed two weeks for snow closure, our meeting topics were changed. Some of the music I had prepared had to be eliminated. I felt like someone had pulled the rug out from under me.

Yesterday Ray Carlson, the high councilor over the YW in the stake asked me to lead a choir for a special stake YW standards night event.

It is going to be a special opportunity but it will require selecting music and finding practice times. Last night I got asked if I would help with a musical number at a funeral tomorrow. The family needed an alto to complete an ensemble. I have been hyperventilating this morning trying to get things done so I could help with that. I told Daddy last night that I am going to block out April, May, and June with all the family commitments and activities in those months.

Mike is expecting his mission call any day. He wants to go through the Idaho Falls Temple the first time and then he and his buddies have big plans about going to most of the Utah temples.

In answer to the most asked question by siblings calling home: Yes, John and Marla are still dating seriously. She would make a nice addition to our family and we are all hoping John can talk her into making the arrangement permanent.

Becky has dated Kyle Bradford a little and they seem to enjoy each other. Shauntel thought from what I wrote last week that he must be an "After-glow" type but when I told her that one of their dates was to the Smith Fieldhouse weight-room, she decided maybe not. Isn't it hard to conjure up an individual from another person's description?

With all the snow closures the last few weeks, Tim's games have been unpredictable. This week he has games

Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Tim is doing a great job and looks forward to every game. I usually take a bag full of dolls, crayons, markers, Barbie accessories, food, and books for Sara Kay and her friends whose brothers are on the team, too. She thoroughly enjoys the time in the gym and on the bleachers.

Paul had two church ball games last week but decided to not participate because of an injury to his back the week before. I didn't realize it was still hurting until after work Friday night when I saw him hobbling around. He had gone to play ball at the stake center Friday afternoon and the previous games' injury started up again. This week he will be in Boise at Science Day on Saturday and unable to play, so hopefully by next week he will be feeling better. The coach thought it was probably a pulled muscle and counseled him to give it a rest for a couple weeks. Paul has had so much going on lately with school, piano, work and Honor Society that I was glad for him to have an excuse to miss a few games.

Tim just got home and asked me if I got the toothpicks for his Science Day tower project. He spent several hours Saturday working on a mouse-trap car that never really ran so he has decided to compete in the earthquake tower division. They will both leave Saturday morning about 2 a.m. and spend the day in Boise competing and bumming around at Hewlett Packard's' expense.

February 12, 1996

[Mom] When we got home from the council Eagle Scout fireside last night where Daddy, Paul and Tim performed, we dropped into bed and gave a sigh of relief that the week was over. Earlier in the day, they sung a special number in sacrament meeting commemorating Scout Sunday. Our lives are full of special things, but we are stretched with commitments and somedays I'm not sure if we can hold it together. I know the Lord sustains us.

Last week was a big one for Paul. Yesterday he was awarded his Duty to God Award in sacrament meeting. On Thursday he received word that he had been selected for a $1,000 scholarship from the Tylenol Corp. and also received a letter stating that he was a winner in the Elks "Most Valuable Student" contest for the Blackfoot Lodge. It also stated that his app had been forwarded to the state level for judging. This is the same competition that John won locally, took first in state, and also won a $4,000 national award. Mike last year won $500 locally and $1,000 on the state level. We don't know what Paul has won but we are hoping for some good money from it.

He attended the Hewlett-Packard Science Competition with Tim on Saturday and placed first in the A-2 school competition for Chemistry. He won a new calculator and was delighted with that. Tim's tower came in second. If he had just shaved off a tiny bit more Styrofoam from the base, he would have won, but he was .02 behind first place. He was disappointed, but I thought he did well for a Freshman. He placed higher than the other contestants from Snake River on the Engineering test and was the only one competing that wasn't a Junior or Senior.

Last Thursday was Honor Society induction and because Paul is President, I helped with that. I was at a game with Tim for the first while and then left at half-time to go support Paul. Paul and his officers did a wonderful job with the program and it was well attended.

As I was helping serve refreshments, Tracy Thompson pulled me aside and said that shortly after half-time, Tim swished two treys and two hook shots. Friday at Marsh Valley Tim had another good game and made several points. It has been fun to

follow the team and watch them work together. They are a fine bunch of boys and good role models for the younger kids. Tim continues to keep his piano studies going. I am proud of his efforts to be "well-rounded".

Paul was set apart yesterday as first assistant to the Bishop and received a sweet blessing. He was promised that he would be blessed in his preparations for upcoming events. I was especially pleased with that promise because he has been working hard at his piano numbers in preparation for his competitions and has felt like he was not progressing as he needs to. This morning when he began practicing his festival piece, it sounded like it was coming along. I visited with him about it and commented that it sounded like it was starting to "gel". He agreed. I have been thinking about the practice some companies have of "matching funds" in savings programs. It seems like the Lord has his own program of "matching". He will bless us in relation to our effort. True and concentrated effort brings forth matching strength and capacity from the Lord.

It was fun last Saturday to take a few hours and see our Utah family members. We met Becky and John and Mike in Provo and later Marla joined us. What fun to visit and be on their turf for a while. The only hard part for me was that I could see the stress and strain they are all under and my heart goes out to them. I know that each of you are feeling that same pressure and that it is exhausting at times to hang on and keep pushing. You all face differing challenges but the stamina, courage, and faith required to succeed is the same. Daddy and I continue to marvel at each of you and your commitment to your goals and the gospel. You are a joy to us!!

We hoped to be in Provo when Mike's call arrived but it didn't come so he continues to wait and wonder. John and Marla are getting along fine and he is spending President's Day weekend with her family. Becky is considering dropping work in order to survive. She has the funds to finish out her year and just cannot handle the load she is presently carrying. Our prayers are with her in this decision. Steve and Bonnie have a lovely, roomy apartment and were the usual gracious hosts. Steve showed Daddy his computer set-up and they spent a lot of time "talking shop". Bonnie and I had a good visit about the comings and goings of family. The whole time we visited, SaraKay and Rachel played together and kept us laughing. Little Nathan is growing leaps and bounds and is so animated and fun. Bonnie got him laughing a real belly laugh playing "peek-a-boo".

They babysat SaraKay for us while we attended a lovely dinner compliments of the Scouting Western Region. Our council qualified to attend. The place we went to dinner was in a wooded part of Salt Lake and the restaurant was fashioned after a French villa, including cobblestone streets, fountains, swans, and wonderful pastries. A fun night!

Friday Andrea called and said that David will be interviewed this week for his John Hopkins fellowship opportunity. This is quite an honor for him to be selected for the interview and we were thrilled to see him advance to this part of the process. Good luck, David.

Daddy just called to say that his three-year evaluation with the regional scout director went very well. Brad Allen, his boss and the council scout executive, had rated him superior on every criterion. What a relief and joy! Last week Lockheed (INEL) announced another 1,000 layoffs by the end of March. There are about seven families in our ward that will be affected by this. What a trial and worry for them and their families. We can be so grateful for the work opportunities that each of us have and we continue to pray that each of you

will have the financial means to meet your needs. Mom

February 19, 1996

[Mom] Mike received his mission call last Thursday and will be serving in the Mexican, Chihuahua Mission, with departure date of May 8th. Thursday afternoon I was getting my hair cut and Jan Barrett said that Janet Jenks let her know that their family was driving to Rexburg to take Jared's mission call to him. Jared and Mike submitted their papers the same day so I suspected that Mike's probably had come, too. I called Mike in Provo and his roommate confirmed that the envelope had arrived and Mike would open it at 10:00 that night before dorm prayer.

I guess it is a tradition in their dorm to do it that way. At 10 we got a phone call and Mike read the letter to us and the dorm simultaneously. I was as interested in the departure date as the location because of all our upcoming events. We were hoping Mike's departure and David's graduation wouldn't coincide. When David and Andrea learned of the conflict, they called to tell us that they felt we should be with Mike on the 8th and not worry about the graduation. We appreciated their kind consideration. We have worked out a compromise that I think will work. We will go with Mike to the MTC and then when David and Andrea are ready to relocate later in the summer, we will help them move.

We had a nice holiday weekend. Paul and some friends left Friday morning about 8:30 for Ricks College. Everyone met here and Paul drove the van. Before they left, I took a few minutes to review with them their plans for the day; a campus tour at 10:00, then lunch and apartment hunting. We went over directions to the various apartment complexes, how to get to the Spori Building, and the location of the student center.

After family prayer, they headed out the back door. Paul asked, "Does anyone know how to get to Rexburg?" Dad responded, "If you get to Pocatello Creek Exit, you've gone the wrong way!" Luckily, they found their way and had a nice time. Paul signed a contract at Pine View and will be rooming with Merritt, Justin, and Bret.

He and his group returned about four and spent the next hour playing basketball and football with Tim and his friends. Mike arrived about seven and he and Paul and Brandon decided to go to Rexburg to a dance and see if they could see some of their Ricks College friends and tell them about the mission call. As it turned out, Mike said most of the kids at the dance were visiting from the "Y" and he didn't meet anyone new or exciting.

Saturday Mike and I spent some time going over the mission papers and trying to figure out when to do booster shots, Hepatitis series, eye exams, and shopping since he will only have a week to get things in order after his semester.

When Bishop Godfrey realized that the stake "Spring Sing" that I'm in charge of is on the 28th of April, he offered to let us trade and have May fifth as the farewell date. That would help immensely since we hope to be in Provo on April 26th and 27th for Becky and Steve's graduation and it would be a pretty busy week with a farewell, guests, and dinner to host.

We will find out in the next couple of days what we are doing and let you know. We are going to Provo Friday and will take Mike through the temple Saturday morning. Hopefully we can get some shopping done for him later that day, too. It's times like this that I miss having everyone closer. I know it can't be helped but it would be such a thrill to be in the temple together....

Tim's season is winding down. He has two games this week and the tournament next. Paul's church ball tournament is this

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Paul is going to Provo to spend the weekend with Mike. He especially wanted to go this week since he is trying to avoid taking anyone to the dance on Saturday. He doesn't have anyone he wants to take but says it is "social suicide" to not go. He's happy he's found a way out of it.

Tim has a campout and is debating whether to go to Provo or stay behind and spend the time with the quorum.

[Dad] It's a thrill to have another missionary going out and I am proud of Mike and how he handled his call. He didn't ever talk about places he did or didn't want to go—he was just willing to go wherever the Lord wanted him. As he came home this weekend I think he was feeling the pulling away and changes that take place after high school. It's a real adjustment but he is taking it in stride.

We are really excited to go to the temple with Mike—it is going to be a change of pace for us to go through the Provo Temple. It seemed to be much easier for us to travel than for all the Utahan's to come to Idaho.

I wish you could hear Paul play the piano! He does such a beautiful job, it is a thrill to listen to him. He is so mature in his handling of the pressures of his Senior year, work, and his Church basketball team. He is so quiet that it is hard to know what is going on inside his head, but when we find out it is right and what he should be thinking.

It is going to be with mixed feelings that we see Tim's basketball season come to an end. It has been fun watching him play ball but it has been hard to arrange things so that we could be there to support him for every game. His first tournament game next week conflicts with a ward temple baptismal assignment that I am responsible for, so I guess we will split up in our support next week.

I hated to do it, but I had to drive some nails in walls today to be able to hang some pictures and plaques that your mother has wanted to get up. We really love our home with the decorating and furnishing we have done. Here's a thought: "There are two ways of meeting difficulties: you alter the difficulties or you alter yourself meeting them."

February 26, 1996

[Mom] I've spent the day filling out scholarship forms and doing laundry. The storm that was in Utah yesterday arrived in Idaho today and we have had a beautiful snowfall most of the day. I was grateful that Paul and Tim arrived home safely last night from their Provo weekend. They had battled snow and slush most of the way but got along fine. Daddy, SaraKay, and I left Provo Saturday afternoon after a wonderful morning in the temple with Mike, Steve and Bonnie, Becky, and John and several of Mike's friends. Following the session, we took some pictures by the fountain with the temple in the background. The weather was mild and we visited on the temple grounds, relishing the opportunity to be together.

After a quick lunch, we did some shopping with Mike for a missionary suit so that he can have it for Preference this weekend. I had a list of details to cover with him, including typhoid tablets, immunizations, and passport instructions. It's a challenge getting him ready long-distance.

Last week at my annual exam I asked Dr. Peterson to remove the wart on my right hand. While cleaning light fixtures last week I sliced it and it was sore and unsightly. Dr. Peterson looked at it and said that I would need a surgeon since it was directly over the knuckle and deeply imbedded.

He made an appointment for me and the next day I took SaraKay with me and went

to a Dr. Mosdell. He looked at it and told me that the best way to handle that big of a wart was to burn it out. He asked if I wanted to do it right then and get it over with. I decided to. Sara Kay sat in a nearby chair while he did it. The deadening of the finger was the painful part as it took about nine shots to get it completely numb. I watched as he burned the wart with an electric rod and then lifted it out with tweezers. He then burned the little bits and pieces around the edges and removed every last fragment of it. I had a crater on the top of my knuckle where it had been. Because it is the bendy part of my finger, I am having a difficult time getting it to heal. I can't believe how many of my movements are performed by that right pointer finger. Anyway, it is good to have it removed and hopefully it soon will heal and be better.

I appreciated Shauntel's letter. Several of you have inquired concerning the timetable of the invitro and I appreciated her letting us know just what is happening and when. I know they would appreciate our prayers in their behalf.

We tried to call Grandpa and Grandma Larsen but can't seem to catch them home. I read in the newspaper that the legislators were told to "bring an apple, a sandwich, and pajamas if necessary" this week because of the large load of bills on the agenda. I'm sure that Grandpa puts in some long days especially as the session nears completion.

When Grandma Richards called she said that Grandpa seemed to be doing a little better. He took a stroll yesterday in the undeveloped property nearby looking for decorative rock to use in the landscaping of their yard. That was encouraging to hear.

Charles and Brenda are coming here for a few days this week while they attend the state basketball tournament in Pocatello. Sean was invited to be a part of the varsity team for the tournament and he will travel with the team but the rest of the family will spend parts of Friday and Saturday here with us. We had such fun the time they came for Tiffany and Tera's state tournament and we are looking forward to their visit.

Tim's tournament starts tonight. The ward has a temple baptism excursion at six and we thought the game was at six and Daddy and would have to miss it but we found out the game is at 4:30 so special arrangements have been made so that Tim and Shane Jenks can go a little later and still get in on the temple excursion.

[Dad] This last weekend was a rewarding one. It was wonderful to be with Mike, John, Becky, Steve & Bonnie and my sweetheart in the Provo Temple. It was a long time ago while we were in graduate school that we committed to give $25.00 toward the construction of the Provo Temple. That was a lot of money to starving graduate students with two kids and expecting. I was in the Bishopric at the time and we were touched with the sacrifices that many of the students made to help build a temple. What a blessing that temple has been in the lives of the Saints in that valley! We have certainly received a great return on our investment of $25.00!

As President Cannon of the Temple Presidency instructed those going through for the first time, I was reminded of when I first went through the temple and specific memories I had of that session and my mother.

I have a jump on previous years as far as our taxes are concerned. I have all the information accumulated and would ordinarily be taking it in to Layne VanOrden to file our returns. But I think I will do it myself this year. We are also considering refinancing our home while interest rates are so low. If we can get close to 7% it would be ideal. As we get closer to retirement age, many of our decisions are

driven by that. We certainly don't have anywhere near as much accumulated as I would like to have, but we are doing the best we can. The BSA retirement will be much better than we would have had if we had continued selling insurance.

The third week of March I will be going to Texas for another training session that is for all Scouting professionals after they have been in the business for three years. I am enjoying my work and feel like some of the systems and meetings I am instituting are going to have an impact for years to come.

Next Monday will be our 30th anniversary. Your mother certainly needs congratulations for being able to put up with me for that long, though I will admit I have certainly gotten more lovable and easier to live with as time has gone by. I certainly love and respect your mother as one of the most Christ-like people I know. She is always so concerned about others and their feelings and perceptions, with little or no thought to her own needs. I proudly declare that the wonderful family we have is largely due to her unstinting efforts.

March 4, 1996

[Mom] Today is our 30th anniversary! It doesn't seem possible, but, when I think back of particular events and places, it seems like they happened "eons" ago. I was helping last Friday with a wedding dinner for Chuck Williams and those of us in the kitchen were visiting about things we remembered about our wedding day. It was fun to reminisce and realize how differently we perceive marriage now than we did 30-35 years ago. All of us agreed it had been a lot harder and more of a challenge than we had ever thought possible and we all agreed we were glad we weren't starting over again. That's how life is. It is rewarding as you live it, but as you look back you are grateful that we only have to live it once and can move on.

One thing that seemed to change over the years for all of us was that as young single adults we were pre-occupied with the "who" of marriage and over the years we had all come to recognize that the "How" of marriage (meaning what we do from day to day to keep marriage working) is really the critical issue.

It's funny which memories stick in my mind after 20 years, forming a collage of events that aren't really connected or related. Let me share a few: The morning of our wedding day arising early and quietly preparing to leave the house without waking younger siblings who were still sleeping…the hushed tones as Mom and Dad did the final checking of clothes and recommends; the ride to Idaho Falls in the morning darkness and the realization of my dream that I was finally going to be married in the temple! Sitting in the temple waiting for Daddy to arrive and thinking how awful it would be if he had decided at the last minute to call it off. The sight of Daddy briskly walking through the temple doors, trench coat flapping, suitcase in hand. Experiencing the washing and anointing and recognizing what sweet blessings I had been promised but not realizing how much those blessings would be used in the years ahead. The endowment and its strangeness. Mother at my side helping me put on the temple clothes and the interesting sight of a whole group of people dressed in temple robes. The surprise at finding Daddy on the other side of the veil, crying at the alter and leaving the temple with Mom and Dad and Mom pointing over at Daddy and saying to me, "You go with him now." The wedding dinner at the West Bank. The waitress serving me, saying, "Better enjoy this (being waited on) while it lasts." Singing "Temple by The River" at our reception.

We appreciated all of you children touching base with us in one way or another and making our day complete. It feels good to be at this stage of life and have a

wonderful family, a satisfying marriage, and the hope of eternal life. Daddy is such a kind and thoughtful husband and tries to meet my needs and wants in every way. Hopefully we'll have another 30 years as good as the last.

Last week was the Idaho state basketball tournament in Pocatello and Charles and Brenda, Mandy, Brandon, Tiffany, Tera, and a cousin came to spend Friday and Saturday with us while they attended the games. Sean traveled with the team this year although he is usually only on JV. We had a wonderful time together. They are such a fun family and we just sat around visiting, playing games, and of course, eating. They brought cereal and milk and treats and I fixed meals and we all helped with dishes. We talked of the possibility that in three years Tim could be on Snake River's varsity team and Brandon could be on Moscow's and maybe both teams would be at state.

It was three years ago that Tiff and Tera played in the tournament in Idaho Falls and the family came to stay with us and three years before that we stayed with them in Moscow while Becky competed for state Jr. Miss. We've decided we've got a good thing goin' here and we'd like to see it continue.

Last week was Tim's tournament. Their team took second place but were disappointed with their performance. I think they were all relieved to have the season over. Tim competed Thursday and Friday in a Varsity Scout 3-on-3 tournament and he and his friends won the stake championship. He made 31 points in one of the games. I wish he could have played that well during regular season. He competes Saturday with the other stake winners for the chance to compete for the council title.

Paul is preparing for Chambers tour next week. They are going to perform in the Symphony Hall in Salt Lake, Tuesday, March 12 at 8:00 p.m. We haven't decided what we are doing yet but I know John was interested in getting tickets.

[Dad] March 4th, 1966 seems like such a long time ago but in other ways it seems quite short. As I think of my life with your mother, I can't imagine a life without her. I think how in many ways we are just beginning to know and understand each other. We have an eternity to look forward to together. The love and passion we feel for each other has deepened and grown and we are still stimulated by a touch, a glance, a shared poignant moment, or a shared tear or two.

The times when we share what we have done, read, heard, or experienced are times of spiritual and emotional "touching" that are as significant and meaningful as anything we could imagine. The physical intimacy and comfort we draw from an embrace or holding hands is part of the oneness and unity we feel and brings satisfaction and sense of being "whole". That sense of wholeness and of being unified gives a feeling of strength and power to do what we should and to overcome all that comes our way. I hope that through the gossamer threads of our connection to you that you are able to draw strength to overcome and power to become. Be assured of the love, concern, interest, and support of Heavenly and earthly parents.

March 25, 1996

[Mom] Daddy left early this morning for Island Park to attend their annual staff planning seminar. He will be back Wednesday. He's had a busy time the last two weeks with his trip to Texas and now this event. Last week I had so much going on preparing for the stake Women's Conference. Tuesday night we had a great turnout for our Young Women's choir and it finally started sounding like it should. I scheduled one last practice on Friday

morning since there was no school that day and we were able to do some polishing.

Daddy arrived home Friday and we attended the session that evening and performed two musical numbers with four other couples. It was so fun and we received a lot of compliments on it. Saturday morning the YW choir did the prelude music and one special number. They sounded like angels and we had good feedback.

The speakers for the conference, Pam and Kevin Kazmeier, from Mesa, Arizona, were interesting and enlightening. Pam was a nun for seven years, left the convent because she knew the Lord didn't want her there, and over the next seven years joined 15 different churches until she met the missionaries and finally was baptized into the Mormon church. She described her adjustment to "Mormon culture" and trying to fit into the church and its way of doing things.

She said that when she was baptized the missionaries told her that she would need to wear a dress to church, especially the upcoming Sunday because she would be welcomed into her new ward. The only dress she owned was an evening dress with deep slits everywhere. When she was introduced to the ward she was asked to come to the front and when the bishop asked for the congregation to "show by the raise of the right hand" their support for her, she thought they were waving at her and she smiled and waved back.

Later as she attended Relief Society, she looked around the room at the other sisters and realized "that I was the only one whose thighs were showing." Her vivid descriptions of her first years in the church and all its challenges really opened my eyes to just how difficult it is for new converts to go through the conversion and assimilation process. The whole conference was a real treat!

Daddy spent most of Saturday working on the council paper which is due to go to press this weekend. It is always a struggle to get the information gathered, processed, and finally printed and distributed.

Paul spent most of the weekend in front of the mirror, grooming and peeling his face. Thursday night he came home from work and decided to call some friends and go for ice cream. About 9:30 he arrived home and said that a bunch of them were going to go to the Moreland school playground and play "steal the flag". He went downstairs and got on his night game outfit: black turtleneck, black gloves, black pants, gas mask, and black ski mask. This game is a favorite activity for late summer nights. But, this is not my favorite game because I contend that someone is going to see these kids running around the yard looking like hoodlums and call the police. Fortunately, as yet my worst fears have not been realized.

As Paul left I said, "Watch your step because you don't want to run into something and get hurt." He and his friend laughed at the mere suggestion and were on their way.

About 10:00 I went to bed and soon was awakened by Paul standing in the doorway. "Come see what I have done to my face."

That was not the usual, "I'm home, Mom" greeting and I quickly followed him into the bathroom to find out what was going on. The left side of his face from his cheekbone down was scraped and bloody and his chin was especially raw. He told me how he and another kid were chicken fighting up on the tires in the playground and he pushed the other boy off and fell forward (face first) into the gravel.

His glasses went flying and someone who was coming to his rescue, inadvertently stepped on them, adding insult to injury. To coin a phrase, "It was not a pretty sight".

He had hit his head and his eye was swollen partly shut and his lip was fat enough that he could hardly talk. We made the decision not to go in for stitches on his chin, hoping that a well-placed band aid would keep the deepest slice closed until it could heal.

Friday morning it looked really gross. I thought infection had set in but Tim thought it was just the loose scraped-off skin hanging on his face. I thoroughly cleaned the whole area with peroxide, medicated it, and hoped for the best. He had a date to a school dance Saturday night and worried whether he was going to look human enough to go. But, after two days the wound stopped seeping and he had removed enough dead skin and scab to look pretty good.

Grandpa and Grandma Larsen are home from Boise and we had a short visit with them last night. A few weeks ago when Grandpa called, SaraKay took the call. She visited with Grandpa for a minute and then called me to the phone with the following explanation, "It's for you, Mom. It's Alva Lu's husband." Of course, Grandpa heard her say it and I rubbed it in pretty good, too. We laugh about it every time we think about it. It is good to have Alva Lu and her husband back from Boise and a part of our lives again!

The weather last week was beautiful and I got some yard work done. It felt good. Today the wind chill is about -20 and I'm wearing a sweatshirt around the house to keep warm. That is one thing about Idaho....lots of variety.

March 12, 1996

[Dad] Thoughts for the day: *"Opportunities are often disguised as hard work, so most people don't recognize them."* (Ann Landers) *"Morality is not really the doctrine of how to make ourselves happy but of how we are to be worthy of happiness."* (Immanuel Kant)

Last Tuesday we took the Explorers to Harper Engineering to visit with Jack Harper about career opportunities in engineering. It was quite interesting although I don't think many of the boys were interested because of the math required. I feel like too many people are frightened away by challenges, mentally or physically. Yet, that is where the best opportunities usually lie. I'm grateful that each of you have a strong work ethic and are probably guilty of getting in too deep than being frightened away by hard work.

Vince Lombardi, the great football coach, said*: "I believe in God and I believe in human decency. But I firmly believe that any man's finest hour, his greatest fulfillment to all he holds dear, is the moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle, victorious."*

Another major experience of the week for me was a Wood Badge Staff Development Friday night and most of Saturday. It is interesting to observe the differences in leaders and how they accomplish the same task. This is the fourth Wood Badge course that I have experienced. Each course director has been different in the way he managed, controlled, delegated, taught, and pursued the objectives of the course. And in reality, I can't say that any one way is right and the others are wrong. There are certain management styles and preferences that are more in harmony with the way I like to function, but there are certainly merits in each person's approach.

People have different capacities for keeping within time constraints for a task. Some leaders are more involved in the process and do more teaching along the way. Some show more discipline and restraint in letting others do their jobs. Some are more ego-invested in the leadership role and sense of power that

comes from being #1. I am grateful for the way in which good men can pull in the Spirit regardless of differences of style.

I am convinced of the basic need for drawing upon the Spirit in all that we do. Scouting is grounded and based on spiritual principles and when good people get together under the direction of the spirit they can accomplish miracles in touching the lives of boys or men for good.

Next week I will be in Texas all week for a training session. And then the first three days of the following week are a staff planning conference. In the meantime, I need to type and prepare the Teton Trails for publication. I have my work cut out for me.

[Mom] Here's a condensed version of some of our family happenings this past month:

Lindsay's grandfather, Lowell Bennion, passed away and Lindsay was asked to speak at the funeral representing the grandchildren. He was one of the few that worked at the Teton ranch with his grandfather and remembers him in his more vibrant years.

A few days prior to leaving for the funeral Lindsay learned that one of the other speakers on the program was Pres. Hinckley! Although Stephani was unable to go with him, he did take Katie and she had the opportunity to meet many family members and even shake Pres. Hinckley's hand. I am sure that in years to come she will think back on that occasion and it will grow in significance for her. From all reports, Linds did his usual fine job and even received a written note from a general authority who was touched by what he had to say.

On March 21st Shauntel will begin the next step of the invitro procedure and will take eight injections daily of a drug designed to prepare her for the egg extraction. The doctor was very frank about the risk of serious illness and possible hospitalization from this drug and so we ask all of you to remember her in your prayers.

Randy is nearing the completion of his second year of medical school and has boards in June. We're proud of him and his tenacity with this difficult course.

Jonie is nearing the completion of her management course and wondering what to do with the offers being made to her by the Pima Tribe. Jeff has also had an offer for some training and they are trying to figure out how to juggle kids and careers.

Steve had a good experience on a business trip to the backwoods of Kentucky. He was sent to work on the computer system of a coal mining company and spent two days in the Cumberland Gap country. He felt quite satisfied with what he was able to accomplish. He commented that the people were kind to him and very friendly and he was able to discuss the gospel with several people during his stay.

David is finishing his last trimester, filling out job applications, and working on projects for potential employers. He said he has over 80 pages of reports due in the next two months and his future employment could hinge on his performance on these projects.

He was struggling with headaches for a while but was feeling a little better Sunday when I called. He and Andrea are ready to be through and get into the work force with a little more structured time and fewer research projects. Dave's graduation was changed to May 10th and so Daddy and I will fly out the day we drop Mike off at the MTC.

Becky has her first interview today. She injured her leg playing a student\faculty game last week and has been hobbling around. Today she went to the doctor and he confirmed that it was a "bad one" and to go easy for a few weeks. She is in the

thick of resumes, portfolios, and evaluations and also on the final few weeks of the semester.

John signed a new housing contract today and will be moving the first of spring term. He is enjoying his major and also enjoys the hospital job.

He and Marla are cooling things off a bit since she has decided she wants to move ahead with mission plans. I think he could see it coming and has decided to "move on" with his life and see what happens.

Last Saturday John, Mike, and Becky went to the temple together and had a wonderful time. They are such a strength and support to each other as they face their individual challenges.

Mike is trying to stay focused on school and yet take care of missionary preparations. It's going to be hard to have him home for such a short time. His life-long friend, Matt Pretl, is struggling with the decision of whether to serve a mission. Mike and Marianne Day held a special fast last Sunday in Matt's behalf. I called his mother this morning and shared that with her and she shed a few tears and confided in me what they have been going through with Matt. She said she has thought so many times, "Where is Mike when we need him?"

Paul is on a three-day tour and then competes Thursday for Crawford Cup. His number is absolutely beautiful and he has really paid the price in practice time and effort. I feel like we are on the verge of being home "free" with Paul and all his senior duties. We have only two more scholarships to apply for, Crawford Cup, and scholarship tryouts. His final difficult trimester is nearing completion, and the end is in sight. Paul has been trying to convince me to let him apply for a construction job this summer instead of Kesler's. He just hates working for minimum wage and has a friend who made over a thousand dollars a month last summer working construction. The thought of having Paul gone for the summer depresses me but I am trying to be open minded and give it some consideration.

Tim's varsity scout team took third in the region. It was fun watching it played off. It was a 3 on 3: first team to 15 points or ahead after 15 minutes of play. I thought he should have been happy to take third but he wanted to take second behind the Thomas team, but they just didn't hold it together.

Tim is jumping rope every day to increase his quickness and also preparing for music festival. His latest project is trying to teach SaraKay to ride a bike. I trade him dish duty for bike time since I don't last long running along behind SaraKay and trying to hold her up while she figures out what to do.

Sara Kay went on an airplane ride. She was invited to visit Whitney while we went to choir practice last Sunday and we agreed. When choir was over I went to pick her up and a man visiting Davis's said that Daryl took the kids for an airplane ride with a friend of hers. Needless to say, I was surprised (alarmed) that she would do such a thing without asking permission.

An hour later they returned safe and sound. Daddy was ready to sever all ties over the incident, but we talked it through and came to an agreement that we felt would work in future situations. It has been a challenge for us to continue a neighborly association with Davis's when so many things happen that we don't approve of and we never know it's happened until after the fact.

One Sunday they invited her to play and she ended up going out to eat with them at a local restaurant. Sometimes I feel like I need a list of "100 things SaraKay Can't Do" and need to present it every time she is invited to visit.

The last few days have been a marathon as I have made final preparations for Crawford Cup including calling contestants, parents, setting up practice schedules on the grand piano, and making sure the program was ready to print. I also had my first organ class for the stake last Saturday and have worked to help the instructor contact class members, prepare handouts, and schedule buildings for the event.

Last week was my first rehearsal for the Young Woman's choir that I am directing for the Women's conference next week and yesterday and today I have been frantically recruiting YW presidencies to get their girls there. I have received permission, copied music, prepared folders, made phone calls and done everything I can think of to make it a positive experience but it has been an uphill battle getting the girls to participate. Hopefully after yesterday's efforts, we will get a few more to come. Daddy and I are singing in a couple's number for the Friday night program and I'm in charge of the music for both sessions as well.

I told Bishop Godfrey when I had my temple recommend interview that I would welcome a release if he felt the time was right. I have been in five years and I really think it is time for a change. We have four performances in the next seven weeks in addition to the stake choir concert on April 28 which we begin practicing for next week. I will be glad to see May arrive and put music aside for a few months.

We are expecting Grandpa and Grandma Larsen home this weekend if all goes well in Boise. The county party tried to talk Grandpa into running for another session but he has held to his decision to put it aside and pursue some other things at this point in his life. We feel good about that decision and look forward to having them around again.

We are making plans to go to Richland for Easter and help get Grandpa and Grandma's yard put in for them. It will be a fun break for us and a chance to see their new home. Mom said that Dad has felt pretty good the last few days and has been out in the yard pulling weeds.

When she said that he was pulling weeds, I knew that was a good sign. If there is anything that Daddy hates its weeds and quack grass and just knowing he was cleaning things up reassured me that he may have slowed down but he is still the "same old dad".

Daddy left early this morning to catch his ride to the airport in Idaho Falls. He has an hour layover in Salt Lake and will arrive in Texas a little after noon. Isn't modern technology wonderful!

When I walked SaraKay to the bus this morning it was so beautiful and warm that I called my neighbor and asked her if she would like to walk outside today with me. She agreed and we left about nine for the church parking lot. By the time we had walked that far, we were both cold. The wind had come up and the cold breeze negated all the beautiful sunshine. We retreated to the gym and finished our hour walking inside. It gave me an opportunity to visit with Melanie as we walked and that is something I haven't done in a while.

This past week was a big one for Paul. On Monday he left for Chambers tour in Salt Lake. We had decided not to go to the concert this year and he said that it didn't matter to him, but when he got home he said that as he stood up on the stage to perform, he noticed some parents there and wished someone was there for him.

During the intermission, one of the students spotted Steve in the crowd and it was a nice surprise for Paul. We appreciated Steve being there for him.

I had been concerned about Paul being worn out for Crawford Cup on Thursday. When he got home from tour Wednesday

afternoon, he went in to the piano and tried playing through his song; it was ragged. He got up and didn't play again that night.

The next morning, he was up bright and early practicing. He arranged for Daddy to give him a blessing before the concert that night. His piece was well prepared but very difficult with lots of tricky fingering and runs. I knew that he had some stiff competition and just hoped that he would be able to do his best.

When he went up to perform he took his time adjusting the bench and positioning himself. He proceeded to play his piece with precision and confidence, his fingers racing over the keys. In the final few measures there is a quick run that goes from very high to low and then ends with a loud chord, several counts rests, and then two loud staccato bass notes for the finish.

In the moment between the last chord and the staccato ending, the audience was perfectly quiet. When he hit the final notes the audience came alive with applause. He had played well and the audience knew it and he knew it. What a special moment for all his efforts!

When the competition was over, Paul took first and Brooke Taylor, second. Paul told me several weeks ago that he could show me in his journal where he set the goal two years ago to win Crawford Cup. He said that as he wrote that down, he thought to himself that it was pretty far-fetched. Isn't it interesting how even desiring something can be the catalyst that brings it to pass eventually.

That night there were some other good things that happened. I had hoped that Tim would be willing to attend the competition to support Paul and I wondered if I would need to mention it to him. He had gone to Shane's to play ball and I went over to pick him up about 6:30. When we got home, he asked what time the competition started. I told him that we had to be there by 7:00 and he asked what the dress was for the evening. He proceeded to get ready and then confided in me that he wanted to take Paul to McDonalds afterwards, win or lose. The program had 21 participants and went on and on. Tim and SaraKay both were ready for it to end.

Following the announcements of the winners and visiting, Tim treated Paul to a "super-sized" meal and the two of them got home about 11. They visited with us on the bed, replaying the night's events. I appreciated Tim's s sensitivity to Paul and thought it showed a lot of maturity.

The other thing that happened involved Daddy. As Paul, was getting ready to leave, I noticed how scuffed his shoes were and commented that perhaps he ought to polish them. I went into the room where Daddy was reading his paper and mentioned that Paul's shoes looked pretty scuffed up and perhaps some polish would help. Dad shook his head and agreed. No movement. Sensing that my hint hadn't been strong enough, I suggested that perhaps he (Daddy) might offer to assist or at least instruct Paul. Daddy got up and commented, "You don't know how to shine shoes? By the time I was eight one of my duties each Saturday was to shine all my Dad's shoes. I can't believe you've never shined shoes!" Daddy proceeded to apply the polish and buff them up to a beautiful glow.

After we got home that night, Daddy said that he kept thinking about Paul not knowing how to shine shoes and he began wondering if Steve, David, John, or Mike had all left home without that basic skill.

This discovery was especially painful because we had been asked to do a presentation for a combined Relief Society and Priesthood meeting for the Thomas Third Ward Sunday morning and we had been preparing handouts on "effective

families" and parenting skills. Bishop Murdock asked us to speak because he said our family was so exemplary. Little did he know that although our children seemed like great kids, not one of them left home knowing how to polish their shoes!

We attended "Know Your Religion" Friday night and learned about the apostasy. We learned that the early church (meridian of time) died out not because of Roman persecution, although that was a factor, but mainly because of false beliefs that entered in and because of the intellectualization of the doctrine. The prophets today have the task of keeping the church doctrines pure so that we do not suffer a similar fate. Interesting!

April 9, 1996

[Mom] I told Daddy last night that I hoped I would be able to find time today to record my thoughts about our weekend with Grandpa and Grandma Richards in Washington. I have wanted to write about it before time erased some of the feelings and memories.

Perhaps one of the sweetest memories that a family can possess is the memory of the care and consideration given aging grandparents. The example set by the older generation usually becomes the standard for the rising generation and the pattern for actions in years to come. Thinking back on my own growing up years, I recall the many acts of kindness my mother and father performed for their aging mothers. Although their own lives were busy and full, they tried to do their share towards the care of both Grandma's in their later years. I'm sure many of you remember the loving care that Grandpa Larsen gave Grandma in the months immediately preceding her passing. Although many demands and responsibilities vied for his time, he always put her needs first and saw to her comfort.

It has always been a source of pride to me that my parents have been independent and resourceful. They had goals of what their retirement years should be spent doing and they moved ahead accomplishing those goals for themselves while at the same time keeping a close relationship and support system for each of us married children.

Each time I would visit them in St. George, I rejoiced in their beautiful home and yard, in their wide circle of friends and in their continuing example of righteousness.

When it became necessary last summer for them to make a change, I didn't really realize how drastic this change would be for them, considering how adaptable and resilient they have always been. But things were different now than they had ever been before. Grandpa's health was failing and his stamina and endurance diminishing. When I arrived in St. George to help them move, the scope of the project nearly overwhelmed me. Grandpa and Grandma had been packing boxes for months, anticipating the move. Grandpa would work for a while and then rest and then work some more. Grandma tried to take care of a lot of the business that Grandpa had previously seen to plus do her share of the packing. They had moved nearly 50 times in their married life and yet this time was especially challenging.

As I began helping and became a part of the drama for a few days, I marveled at all they had accomplished and at their state of readiness for "moving day". I also became aware of the host of friends they were leaving behind. People brought food, friends visited, neighborhood children expressed their love, ward members called and offered assistance, neighbors came to load the van, clean the house, provide treats, and say their thanks and good-byes.

The morning of the move, 21 priesthood quorum members showed up at 8:00 a.m. to assist as well as ten Relief Society

sisters and neighbors on every side. I sensed by the response and a few remarks of those assisting us, that it was "pay back" time; that Ilene and Arch had done so much for others that now they were there to show their love and appreciation to them. The van was loaded and on its way by 10:00 and I was en route home, waving good-bye to Mom and Dad as they stood in front of their home in St. George.

From there they and all their belongings arrived in Richland and Nate and Maureen and Don and Lisa became the helping hands that were needed during this time of transition. Maureen and Nate offered to let them stay with them until their new home was completed and Nate began work on the house. Maureen and Lisa helped with the selection of colors, tile, carpet, and other details. In January the house was completed and the family helped Grandpa and Grandma move in.

A few weeks ago, as I visited with Nate about their needs, he commented that he knew that something needed to be done with the yard now that spring was approaching. Daddy and I had been hoping to visit them and help out and so Nate said that he would visit with Don and Lisa about it and let us know.

A plan evolved. A work party was planned for April 5th and 6th. Don, who had just completed putting in his own sprinkling system, would design a system for Grandpa and Grandma and have the supplies ready. The rest of us would get the lawn planted.

Thursday night we arrived in Richland and talked over the work assignments for the next day. The yard in back was 103'x 60' and the sloped half would be covered with typar and burgundy lava rock. Don and Steve would trench and prepare the system, the rest of us would clear the ground, do minor leveling, put down the typar, and spread the rock. Grandma handled the treats, drinks and fed the crew.

By seven Friday night, we had nearly completed covering 3000 square feet with rock and trenched and prepared the system. At seven Saturday morning, we all gathered around the table and were given our assignments. Don was organized and meticulous in his job as "head honcho" and the rest of us were glad to follow his lead.

Charles, Sean, and Brandon now joined us bringing our numbers to 17. Except for a quick lunch and a couple "popsicle breaks" we worked all day. We completed spreading the rock, installed trim dividing the lawn and rock, completed the sprinkling system, picked rock, raked, planted grass, and rolled both front and back grass areas.

It was a satisfying experience to work together and see the yard transformed. Everyone seemed to sense what needed to be done and cooperated to get it accomplished. The weather also cooperated.

At one point, several of us were picking rock left from the sewer installation, Charles and Nate were wielding landscaping rakes, and we were all converging on the last section of ground to be planted. I looked over at the driveway and saw Whitni and SaraKay both sweeping the driveway and then picking up the dirt with tiny little dustpans and whisk brooms. It was a funny sight, but they stayed with it until they had removed a lot of the debris created by our activities.

Several neighbors came to inquire about what was going on and the high priest group leader who helped with the trenching commented that it had been a spiritual experience for him to be a part of it all. I really felt like the Lord had honored our wishes, heard our prayers, and that everything had miraculously "come together" in the time allotted. Looking back, I don't know if we could have done it

with one less person or one less hour.

By dark Saturday night, equipment was loaded, the driveway was swept, and the sprinklers were on. Since Charles was leaving to drive back to Moscow that night, it was decided that they would give Grandpa a blessing then, rather than wait until Sunday.

It was a touching sight to see Daddy, Don, Nate, and Charles in the circle. Charles was "voice" for the group and he expressed love and offered comfort. At one point in the blessing, he paused and struggled for a few moments, tears streaming down his face, and then he told Grandpa that in time, "when the Lord needs a good man," he would be called home. It was a tender moment. Grandpa and Grandma both expressed appreciation to all of us for our efforts in their behalf.

Sunday we watched conference on TV with the extended family. We were a sunburned and tired bunch but it was a treat to be together. Following conference, Grandpa Richards had planned a little dedication ceremony for their home, including remarks by Nathan (the contractor) and a dedicatory prayer by Grandpa. Monday morning we left for home and arrived about 6:30. Daddy had checked some story tapes out of the library and we listened to several of them which made the trip more enjoyable.

This morning I received word from Becky and David that they have both received job offers. Becky's will be working in an alternate school for the summer months starting the middle of April and David with Texas Instruments. David is also pursuing some other leads and will keep us informed as to their decision. It is an exciting time for them.

Shauntel will have surgery tomorrow. She seems to be responding well to all the drugs she has been on and things seem to be progressing as planned. Thank you for all your prayers.

Wednesday evening Grandpa Larsen went with us to a scout recognition banquet at Ricks College. It was a special treat to have the chance to visit with him as we traveled and to enjoy his company at the banquet. He is well known and has such an ability to mix and mingle wherever he goes. He has taught me so much over the years and I will be ever grateful for his continuing influence in my life. Whenever I see the goodness in Daddy and in you children, I know that "it's in the genes!"

[Dad] This last weekend has certainly been a memorable one as you can sense from Sue's account. It was a thrill to be involved in such a comprehensive project with all the family working so hard to accomplish our goal. There was only once that there was a little tension or frustration. As we were puddling in the trenches some of the younger kids began playing in the mud and making mud balls.

But even that was short lived. It seemed like Grandma kept making trips to the grocery store to keep up with the food and drink requirements of that large group.

I particularly enjoyed working with Don and was certainly impressed with how quick and bright he is and what a good organizer and "boss" he is under those circumstances. All of the kids were such good workers and stayed right with it until the job was done with nary a complaint. Tim and I have the training on sprinkler systems necessary for us to put in our own (if we could afford it).

I was impressed with the strength and resilience of youth as I watched Paul shovel and haul rock all day. It was a thrill to watch the sprinklers cycle through and to see the ground leveled out, the grass planted, and the hill covered with rock and to know that Arch and Ilene could handle things now with a little help from time to

time.

It was sad to see how much Arch's disease has taken over and how limited he is in what he can do. Sunday night we stayed up watching "Ten Commandments" and when Grandpa tried to take his walker to the bedroom to go to bed he couldn't hardly move at all. His feet wouldn't move forward much more than a fraction of an inch at a time.

Finally, Sue and I each took an arm and almost carried him into the bedroom. That was scary to think of Grandma handling a situation like that alone. She was undaunted and said they would just get a wheel chair for those kinds of situations and she would be all right.

There is one other thought I wanted to share with you that I forgot to include last week. When I went to Texas, one of the highlights of the trip was being able to break away and go to the Dallas Temple. As we pulled into the parking lot a car pulled in behind us with an Idaho license plate. It was a young couple from Burley who had just moved down a week and a half before. It was wonderful to see them doing what they knew was right, in a strange city where it would have been easy to drop out of sight, far from home and family.

I couldn't help but think of each of you and the pioneering spirit that is still alive and coursing through your veins as you make your way in strange cities far from home. Some of the physical hardships may not be there, but the strong testimony and commitment is still required. And the emotional and psychological demands are sometimes just as great, though somewhat eased by the telephone lines.

April I, 1996

[Mom] Daddy commented yesterday that he hoped I would remember if Bonnie called today that it was April Fool's day and not be tricked for a third year. I assured him that I would be on my guard.

We had a sweet Sabbath yesterday. Our choir performed an Easter number and there were some beautiful testimonies. One was given by a fairly new member of our ward, Wilford Alvarez, who is from Chile. His wife had a new baby last week and the members of the ward have been very good to them. He spoke broken English but expressed how much he appreciated the love that had been shown and how they had felt accepted into the ward.

The second testimony was given by another new member who recently moved with her disabled husband and three small children from California to make a new life here in Moreland. They don't have much and her husband's accident has really been tough to deal with. She told how the goodness of their neighbor (landlord) and the love of the ward members have been one of the sweetest experiences of their married life. Although her husband isn't a member, she is and they have come into complete activity because of the ward's concern and acceptance.

She told of being raised in a ward and of driving to church but sitting in the car and not going into the building because she felt like such an outcast. I think it is vital that in a congregation of saints everyone feels loved and accepted despite race or economic status. Hopefully each of us are reaching out in our wards to touch the lives of all members.

Steve called the other day to visit about graduation plans. We are excited to celebrate with him and Becky!

Each of you are working so hard to get your schooling and qualify yourselves to contribute to this world and the kingdom. I am immensely proud of you and of the "grit" you have shown to make it. I can hardly wait to attend the upcoming graduations and shoot a few rolls of film

with the "'Y" in the background. We found out that Steve and Becky's convocations are at the same time so we are going to draw straws and split up for that portion of the day.

My thoughts have been on those of you who are job hunting. Becky and David are both interviewing and wondering where they will be a few months from now. Dave will be flying to Dallas to interview with Texas Instruments and Becky had an opportunity to meet principals last week from Granite High School and Kearns. She feels like she has her foot in the door now with those two schools.

In a month and a week we will be putting Mike in the MTC. He is starting to feel the impending parting and I sense his nostalgia. I wish we had just a few more weeks to enjoy him. We miss him already and he isn't even gone yet. His friend Blake Barnard called and visited with me about getting ready for his mission and he commented that he spent $1200 in two hours last Saturday buying clothes and supplies. We are grateful Mike has his money ready and that we are not feeling that pinch right now.

This past week I was able to find some time to work on genealogy and get more of my mother's line copied off. Yesterday Paul, Tim, Daddy, and I had sorted through all the genealogical information that Grandpa Larsen gave us.

Daddy has his work cut out for him but there has been a lot of research done and it should yield some opportunities for temple work. No one has worked on the Larsen line for over 30 years and there is lots to do. It was kind of fun to work together on it with the boys and we even called Grandpa Larsen and AlvaLu and invited them over to talk over some ideas. When Grandpa Larsen came in the back door, Daddy said to him, "I don't know if you want to even sit down and get involved with this; it's pretty overwhelming!" It was rather overwhelming but I know that Daddy is going to enjoy it once we figure it out.

We spent last Saturday morning getting the scout newspaper ready. Daddy lined up some neighborhood kids to help. This week he has two council recognition dinners at opposite ends of the council and then Thursday we are leaving for Washington for the weekend.

Daddy's boss, Brad Allen, was promoted to be the regional director for an area in California and will be leaving May 1st. What a surprise! We will miss him and Dantzelle but we are pleased to see him advance and spread his influence over a larger area. We are assuming that this change will not affect Daddy's job but it's always a little scary to have changes when they are so much a part of your job.

SaraKay doesn't have a close friend around and so she tags along with Tim and his friends. I realized the other day that she is picking up on some language from these older boys that isn't entirely acceptable for a five-year-old to be using. I was in the high school library checking out books and visiting with Susan Anderson and SaraKay was getting anxious to be on our way. All at once she said in a very loud voice, "Come on, Mom, let's hit the road!"

This next week is a very critical one for Shauntel and Randy. Depending on tests that are conducted this week, Shauntel will be scheduled for surgery. This is the second stage of the invitro process. Shauntel has felt good to this point and the injections have not caused any unexpected or negative reactions. We hope that each of you will keep them in your prayers. They are in good spirits and full of faith that the Lord is mindful of them and their desires.

Following their fast yesterday, Randy gave Shauntel a blessing and she hasn't felt unduly anxious or stressed about the procedures or outcome. I think their

calmness is a sweet manifestation of their faith. I just wish some of the rest of you could have been there to be in the circle with Randy.

[Dad] Two weeks ago I was in Texas, staying at the Marriott Solana in Westlake. The food was one of the highlights of my stay. Every morning they had a buffet of anything you could want for breakfast, but they also had an omelet bar where you select from a broad array of items and they cook it right there in front of you. It was wonderful!

At noon they would have a pasta bar similar to the omelet bar. You would choose the basic seasoning taste—pesto, garlic, onion, etc. Then you would choose the other ingredients to add to the pan—tomatoes, mushrooms, onions, peppers, etc. Then, if you wanted any meat you could choose from chicken, sausage, and so on. The chef would keep adding each of these items to the frying pan and cooking it right there in front of you. He would be juggling three pans at a time in various stages of preparation. After selecting the pasta and sauce you wanted and letting it all heat together for a few moments, he would tip it out into a big bowl and you were ready for an epicurean delight.

I got up each morning at 5:30 and exercised. One night we went out to the hot tub. After soaking for a while, I swam a lap in the small pool and soaked up the heat again.

Last week was a great team building experience in Island Park. I couldn't help but notice how far we have come as a staff since I started working here. There is a greater respect for each other and acceptance of each one's weaknesses without dwelling on the negative and without backbiting and gossip. We were able to quickly work through the calendar for next year and the additional training segments that we had prepared. Then we went snowmobiling around Island Park, up over Two Top and had a ball. Even though there wasn't any snow left down in the valley, the snow was over three feet deep in most places. Fence posts were just poking through in the fields. It is a thrill to be able to race along at 50 to 60 mph and then to wind through the trees.

Our expedition ended on a sad note, however, as one of our party took a shortcut and dropped his machine into a creek and was thrown off with a dislocated hip. He was in great pain and we didn't dare move him until the EMT's arrived. Don't take shortcuts, stay on the trail, break out if you can see where you are going, go slow over the bumps of life, lean into the curves, don't try to climb hills steeper than you have power for, don't be afraid to push the envelope when you feel that everything is under control, appreciate the beauty around you on the flat, and climb the high places for the most breathtaking views and satisfying challenges.

Think about the application of snow machine philosophy to the circumstances of life.

April 15, 1996

[Mom] Daddy spent the weekend at a Wood Badge overnighter and was gone Friday night and most of Saturday so it was nice to have a date Saturday night. Tim babysat for us. He and SaraKay worked most of the day in the yard, helping clean out around the trees, clean the garage, remove the branches Daddy had pruned, and mowing the lawn for the first time. Everything has greened up and is looking nice. I wish some flowers would be blooming for Mike's farewell since he is such a flower lover, but it doesn't look hopeful.

Brad Allen, Daddy's boss, visited with him last week about his "house hunting

odyssey" in California last week. He has a family of eight children and was trying to find affordable housing with adequate bedrooms. He was absolutely aghast at the prices and sizes of the homes!

Brad told Daddy that he first started looking for a house that would fit their needs but after a lot of looking, he decided that he was going about it all wrong. He needed to find a good school first and then buy a house within that district so that his children can be assured a safe environment. He felt that they could compromise on the house but not the children's well-being and education.

Tim played his own rendition of "The Lost Chord" last night at a recital. He had one festival piece that has not come together until this last week and he was a bit apprehensive about performing it but he acted in faith and took the "plunge" by not using his music. Many of the kids his age used their music and he could have, but chose not to. He played it nearly perfectly but haltingly in several places until he came to the last chord. Just mini seconds before the last chord his hand hovered over the keys, shaking, and I thought my insides were going to explode with nervousness for him. He hit the chord. Wrong. He hit another chord. Wrong. He tried again. Wrong. Finally he just looked over at the audience, grinned and said, "Oh, well" and quit.

Luckily his second piece was powerful and polished and he redeemed himself, but he felt bad about "Mazurka." I was overjoyed at his performance of them both considering the work it had taken to get them ready and told him so. He was surprised at my response. He said when he missed the chord all he could think about was the time he and Paul had murdered a duet, "Viva, Poncho" and I had murdered them on the way home from the recital. Well, I don't think it was quite that bad but it was a "down moment" in the history of recitals and one none of us want to relive.

It rivaled the time that Steve and David played a duet and nearly came to blows on the piano bench when they couldn't get it together and neither wanted to follow the other's lead. Anyway, festival is this Saturday and the pressure will be off for a while. Sara Kay was one of the last ones on the program and she was so wiggly that by the time she got up on stage, her outfit was full of static electricity and she looked a little ruffled but she did well and we were proud of her.

I have been thinking lately about what a wonderful stage of life I am in right now. I have the advantage of being old enough that I have seen how life goes as far as the fruits of our efforts with you older children and yet I am young enough that we still have our health and children at home to enjoy. When I was a young mother I knew I needed to give my family my attention and yet I felt a certain restlessness and disappointment that I wasn't out in the world doing something exciting. My faith in the words of the prophet regarding my role as a mother was the thing that kept me at home and "on task" through those difficult and challenging years when you children were small. Watching you as adults and the paths you have chosen, I see the fruits of my labors and that my efforts have been rewarded many times over.

Several weeks ago Daddy and I were asked to give a talk to a combined R. S. and priesthood ward group and we were asked to tell some of the things we had done to raise a successful family. We enjoyed the experience but were unprepared for the overwhelming response we have received.

We are scheduled to present this same topic to the whole stake in October now and I have been wondering what exactly we said that was so amazing. One of the things we encouraged was the mother being in the home so that she could give her

energies to the family. I am ever grateful to Daddy for his loving support of our family and that even in the toughest of times, he permitted me the luxury of being at home to nurture and train.

I think this is one of the great challenges of this generation. The two-income family is such a common thing now and sometimes considered a necessity with the high price of everything, but I know that the Lord will help you to find a way to survive financially if you continue to work towards that end and put your trust in Him. I admire each of you married children and the way you have worked as a team to create a good home and manage your resources wisely.

Paul has been struggling with a decision of what to do this summer. He has really wanted to do something other than Kesler's. Some of his friends have applied to do construction. He put in his resume but has not felt entirely comfortable with the decision. Last week Daddy mentioned to him that Salmon River Camp was still looking for some help. It doesn't pay as good as Kesler's but Paul got excited about the opportunity. He picked up an application and the director encouraged him.

There are several requirements at this camp that are more stringent than Little Lemhi including that he would have to swim 800 meters and have good skills in other areas. He would assist with rappelling, running the river, kayaking, and other high adventure activities. As usual, I can imagine all the risks and dangers but Paul is anxious for the challenge of learning the skills and the experience. I told him that both jobs made me nervous; that I would like to put him in a bottle and put the lid on until mission time and then I wouldn't have to worry about him at all. (I'd be sure to punch holes in the lid, of course.)

Anyway, he and Daddy are making big plans for swimming together to sharpen his skills and he has a big training session this Saturday. I guess the decision is made. He has been very careful with his money and with his scholarship support he will be able to easily have what he needs for school and then next summer to work towards mission.

Several of you are involved in some critical decisions right now. I hope that you are recording your feelings and your thoughts as you find solutions and answers to your challenges. Know that we are aware of your struggles and we pray daily for your welfare. Include the Lord in all your concerns, pray for guidance, gather needful information upon which to make a decision, and then move ahead trusting in His wisdom. Sometimes it is in the "extremities" of life that we come to know the Lord.

Last night we went to "Family Affair" sponsored by the Snake River Fine Arts Association. It involved the Rex McNair, the Oma Jones, and the David Dance families. It was sweet to watch those families perform, particularly the Dance family and their six daughters. When we first moved back to Blackfoot and were living in Taber, the Dances were our nearest neighbors and we bought milk from them and I milked their cow for them when they went on vacation.

However, watching that program caused me to remember five years ago when we did the program. I wanted to come home and find the video of our production. I was thinking how fun it would be to have our family do it again when Tim gets home from his mission, even if we have to fly many of you home to do it.

[Dad] Sue shared with you what Brad had told me about what he was finding in California. He said that compared to here you could get ½ the house for 3 times the money. That is appalling!

Your Grandpa Larsen has been in the paper lately as he has decided to retire from politics. He has been an important part of Idaho politics for over twenty years. In the paper it was reported that much of his efforts now are going to be dedicated to the World Idaho Potato Museum. At least part of his efforts is going into the Boy Scouts with my Planned Giving Committee. I have really appreciated having that association with him.

Yesterday, we had our final staff meeting with Brad. One of the things he did was to go through an exercise of having us write down goals in different areas—personal, financial, education, vacations, family, with our spouse, dreams, etc. It was a good experience that everyone should do and then do it together with one's spouse. As he shared some of his goals from ten years ago when he first did it, it was interesting how many of them had been accomplished. There is a magic to writing them down that helps to make them come to pass!

April 8, 1996

[Mike]Dear family o' coolness, Ahhh, we've reached that time of year when tulips and daffodils blanket flowerbeds across campus, when trees everywhere are exploding forth in beautiful pastel whites, pinks, and lavenders, when love floats gently on the breeze and when a certain freshman at BYU slaps himself and says "Hey, self! You have less than a week of classes left! You enter the MTC in exactly one month, buster! Aren't you going to contribute even once to the family letter before the semester ends?!" So here I am.

This semester has truly been one to remember, as with every other period of life, I've found. I've met a lot of unbelievable people, seen a lot of awesome things, and participated in various memorable events. My classes this semester have even been notable. I'm going to attempt as best I can to outline a few of the highlights.

One of my favorite things about BYU is the countless opportunities to brush with greatness. Besides numerous friends that range from Trustee Scholars to published composers, I've enjoyed attending the collaboration of devotionals, firesides, and activities that have featured famous people. I see General Authorities, most commonly from the Twelve Apostles, literally every week. One week I saw around four within a couple of days and shook hands with Russell M. Nelson. I've truly been blessed spiritually by listening so often to the words of the Brethren.

General Authorities aren't the only cool people I hear. I watched Peter Vidmar a few days ago perform some routines and give the motivational speech I've heard Dad listen to in his car. I attended a symposium where I heard the Jax's speak, the couple that dealt with the deadly outbreak of Ebola virus back east. Earlier in the semester I relished the opportunity to listen to world leader Lady Margaret Thatcher address students in the Marriot Center. Finally, I even get to see two of the most outstanding individuals in the world about once a week: their names are Becky and John Larsen.

Another fun thing about this semester has been my classes. Despite the fact that I've resorted to eating bagels in my History of Civilizations class just to remain awake each day, my Humanities class has transformed me into Mr. Culture, and my Anatomy 260 class, coupled with many hours of quality time in the cadaver lab, has me wishing I could talk with Randy and Shaunnie about his classes and the details of her operation. My Sharing the Gospel instructor is unbelievable, and I'm actually surviving Math 113.

I've done a lot of dating this semester (probably more than I should have, considering I need the money for my

mission) and met several awesome girls. Some guys call me Mr. Smooth since I've been to eight date dances since the start of the school year, six of which were girl's choice, and two of those were to the state capitol (an awesome experience, needless to say). I guess that's one of the benefits of getting to be friends with lots of people instead of limiting myself to a single special someone! As John would say, "Mission first!"

Speaking of missions, it's a good thing mine is approaching fast, for if I had to wait much longer I believe my body would explode. I'm so excited to serve; I've waited a long time for the chance. I still can't believe the time has come. Opening the call with around forty friends in the upper lobby of my hall, not to mention Mom and Dad on the phone, was an event to remember! Greater still was the morning spent with John, Becky, Mom, Dad, Steve, Bonnie, and my friend Brandon in the and beautiful Provo Temple. Since that day, I've had the opportunity to attend the Salt Lake Temple as well. These are exciting times. Well, the computer lab closes in a few minutes so I must say farewell. Love, Mike

April 10, 1996

[Mom]Here's a brief rundown of what's happening in our lives: Steph and Linds are within three months of being finished with his doctorate classwork. Steph still serves as Primary president and Linds was just released as stake clerk. Linds is returning to San Jose to resume his employment with IBM. They have been house hunting on the internet and trying to get thing arranged so they can make the transition from school to work as smoothly and inexpensively as possibly. Their three children, Katie, Sam, and Josh keep them hopping.

Shauntel will be having an invitro procedure done after having surgery in January in preparation for it. It has been a trying time for them. Randy is completing his second year of medical school and enjoying the "hands on" part of his training. Shauntel works as a school psychologist and is presently working in the YW presidency in her ward.

Steve completed his Master's degree in December and is employed by a computer company, Assist, in Salt Lake. They welcomed a son, Nathan to the family in October. Steve's job involves occasional travel. He is grateful that he was able to find employment relatively close to home.

David is graduating with his Masters from ASU on May 10th. We are flying down to be with them on that occasion. David has been offered a job with Texas Instruments but is investigating some jobs closer to home, also. They have two beautiful toddlers, Laurel and Angela.

Rebecca is graduating with her bachelors in April and will be teaching full-time this summer at an "alternate" school in Provo. She has worked this past year at the MTC and enjoyed that as well as student taught last semester. She was selected by her professors as one of the top 15 students in her major.

John is working 24 hours a week at the Utah Valley hospital as well as carrying a full load in Engineering. He is the Elders Quorum president in his ward and has enjoyed that assignment.

Mike is nearing completion of his freshman year and despite his many antics and partying, has kept his 4.0 GPA. He recently received his call to the Chihuahua Mexico Mission and will depart May 8th, just a few days after he arrives home from college. It was a thrill to take him through the Provo Temple with his Utah siblings.

Tim completed his basketball season and is now attending the early morning basketball class. He surprised himself with a straight A card last trimester and has

been busy preparing for piano festival.

SaraKay enjoys kindergarten and is reading first grade books and taking piano lessons. She sometimes gets lonely for friends and tired of Paul and Tim's incessant teasing but takes it all in her stride.

Steve just had his three-year review and was pleased with the evaluation. He is liked and appreciated by his co-workers. His job has given us some financial security that is nice.

I am the ward choir director and stake music chairman. Steve is the YM president and spends a lot of time on that.

April 22, 1996

[Mom]Daddy and I went to the temple Thursday evening. As I pulled my new recommend from my wallet, I noticed that the date on it was '95. For a minute I wondered if I still had last year's recommend instead of the one I had just received. As I turned it over, I realized that it was my new one because it hadn't been stamped yet and it had President Korth's signature on it. Just as I was explaining to Daddy that I had a problem with my recommend, he noticed that the people ahead of us in the line were the Korth's. He pulled President Korth aside, explained the problem, and President Korth went to the front desk and confirmed that it truly was a '96 recommend because he had just signed it a couple weeks ago and he wasn't in the stake presidency in February of '95. What could have been a time-consuming situation for us, was quickly resolved and we were able to get into the session. The Lord is more involved in our lives than we give Him credit for. He knows us and he allows the situations to develop in our lives that we need from an eternal perspective.

The temple was peaceful and sweet. Sometimes when I attend, I am so preoccupied with home and family that I can hardly concentrate on the instruction, but this time I soaked it in.

As I passed through the veil, my thoughts turned to you children and I was filled with gratitude for the power of the gospel in my life. (Dad: We embraced and held each other in the Celestial room until your Mom got things under control again.) We have a lot going on right now in our lives and I see His watch care and feel His concern.

As it came time for the prayer circle, several couples made their way to the front. When it appeared that the circle was complete, an elderly gentleman seated in the back of the session started for the front. At first I was concerned that the officiator would not see him but he did and we all waited as he slowly made his way forward. Another man also joined him and I watched for their wives but realized that they were alone.

The older fellow reminded me of my father and I thought that it would be a sweet experience to join him in the prayer circle but felt a little hesitant. Almost as if she read my mind, the woman sitting next to me rose to her feet and I followed and we joined the circle. For a split second my thoughts were so focused on thoughts of my father that I instinctively reached for his hand and we stood together, holding hands. When I realized what I had done, I felt a little silly, but he responded by holding tightly to mine and in the few minutes of instruction in the circle, we felt an unspoken kinship.

I was grateful for the opportunity to be in the prayer circle since I had some special requests that I had been concerned about, and perhaps he just needed to feel a friendly hand in his for those brief moments. When the prayer was over, he leaned over to me and said, "Thank you."

Friday afternoon Jean Korth and Caryn Esplin called and asked if I would consider running for the school board. The filing deadline was at five that afternoon. I told

them I would need some time to think about it. I called Allan, my political advisor, and he gave me some good advice. He told me to call Chris Jensen, the present board member from this zone and find out if he was going to run again. It had been rumored that he wasn't but Allan felt I couldn't make an educated decision without knowing the facts.

I called Chris and visited with him about his plans. I think it surprised him that I would be so bold. He said that he had initially wanted to give the spot up but later had decided to go with it for another term.

After calling several people including Daddy and Grandpa, I made the decision to move ahead. Since that decision, there have been positive comments from patrons in the zone. Perhaps the most telling response came from Paul and Tim as I mentioned to them that I had filed to run for the school board. Both of them looked at me in unbelief and said, "You?" I guess it is a bit out of line with my usual job description.

It has been an interesting three days. Yesterday I found out that Chris had pulled his petition shortly after I filed mine so I guess I'm running unopposed. I'm trying to stay calm until I get the next few weeks behind me. I told Daddy that I wanted to go to Provo and then Tempe and just "drink in" the joy of the occasions. By the way, Becky is bringing Chet home this weekend to meet the family. He will be leaving next Wednesday for Korea and his job there.

Tim needs to go to the court house and get his permit to take driver's ed. I'll miss all the bonding we've had as I have driven him to and from his mowing jobs in the green Toyota. Seriously, we have had some great times together. The other day Tim changed a flat tire and we fired it up after having it sit idle all winter and as we drove out of the driveway Tim exclaimed, "The beast is back!" I'll end on that! Love, Mom

[Dad] We just spent a wonderful evening in the Civic Center for family home evening listening to the scholarship tryouts from the top festival participants on Saturday. Tim was one of 20 contestants in the 9th - 11th grade group and was chosen as 1st runner up to the 6 scholarship winners. We were proud of his poise and performance and how hard he has worked the last few weeks to get where he was. This morning he won a cap in a shooting contest in his early morning basketball class. To have him do so well on the piano tonight is an evidence of a well-rounded young man.

Paul was one of five seniors competing for a $250 scholarship. He's wanted to use the money to take lessons at Ricks this fall. He was the winner and did an excellent job. We came home and had cake and ice cream to celebrate. There were a lot of young people competing and it was refreshing to see the level of talent that was displayed.

The judges were Brother and Sister Louis Novac from Pocatello. After the winners were announced, they commented on the remarkable amount of talent he sees every time he comes to Blackfoot to judge. He and his wife were sweet to the kids and built them up just to have qualified to be competing tonight.

Paul had a very positive experience with his first training session Saturday to be a river guide. He is going to be such a mature influence on the young people on the staff for Salmon River High Adventure Base. He got along pretty well with the kayak and bolstered his confidence in his ability to do what needs to be done because of the mental discipline his music has helped him to develop.

I am proud to support your Mother in her candidacy for the school board. Many have a myopic picture of her as "just a homemaker." She has many talents and insights that will be a tremendous resource

on the board and will help to bridge strained relationships between the board and the teachers of the district. Patrons will be much more willing to come to her with their feelings and questions than they were her predecessor.

With the experiences we have had bringing so many kids through this system, seeing them off to college, and helping them qualify for scholarships, we are in a position of strength. Out of nine graduates from Snake River High we have had four Valedictorians and all of you have been at or near the top 10% of your class--8 high honor students. That should earn your mother some credibility. Also, with this graduation there are 14 BYU degrees in our immediate family. Incredible, isn't it?

In closing I would bring your attention to Mosiah 2:41. *"And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness. 0 remember, remember that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it."* That is true and I bear witness of it also. The blessings and timetable often are not what we think they should be, but it is true nonetheless!

April 30, 1996

[Mom] This morning Daddy brought in a sheet of paper with the date and "Dear Family" typed on it and handed it to me and said that he had started the family letter this week. With that kind of a contribution, this letter might very well set some sort of record for length. Hopefully he will find time tonight and add a little more.

This past week was truly a memorable one. Though certainly not in any specific order of importance, the following events kept us hopping, hoping, and humbled. The early part of the week was spent preparing for the upcoming trip to Provo. One concern we had was that the van would make the trip without incident. It has a lot of miles on it and has begun to show signs of wear. I visited with Daddy about my concerns and he recommended that we take it in for a lube and check-up. It was good that we did because one tire was split and would not have made the trip without blowing. I was grateful that I had followed up on Daddy's suggestion and prevented a mishap.

Wednesday evening SaraKay's friend, Whitney, called to have her over to play and because SaraKay had been over there Sunday I invited her to come here for an hour. Before the visit was over, SaraKay had fallen on the trampoline and sprained her ankle. I had visions of carrying her around campus the next day for graduation, but Daddy wrapped it and gave enough support that she was able to hobble along.

We left about eight Thursday morning to get to Provo in time to take lots of good pictures of Becky before Commencement. It wasn't until an hour and a half later that we realized we had forgotten our garment bag with all our Sunday clothes in it and had to turn around and head home to retrieve it. What should have been a peaceful trip turned into a much more tiring day for us complete with mad rush to take a few pictures and get to commencement in time to get decent seats.

Once we got situated in the Marriot Center, we thoroughly enjoyed the chance to visit with John and Mike. Daddy took the seat next to Becky's boyfriend, Chet Seely, and had a good visit with him. I thought he must be serious about his intentions if he was willing to spend Thursday and Friday with us. We were very impressed with him and had further opportunity to get

acquainted when he and Becky arrived home for the weekend. It was certainly a momentous occasion for Becky to take any boy with her to her home ward and there were lots of interested looks from ward members.

Chet is leaving tomorrow for an internship in Korea for three months. It has added an interesting twist to their courtship and will give them a chance to get better acquainted through email correspondence.

Friday morning Steve and Becky's convocations were both scheduled at 8:00 a.m. and so the family split up. Paul, Tim, and SaraKay were about "sat out" by the time we headed for home Friday. Steve and Bonnie's Rachel had been sick and Bonnie's mom offered to babysit so that they could enjoy the day. We appreciated that gesture and enjoyed the chance to have Morris, Julie, and Kimball with us for the luncheon afterwards.

Friday night after commencement we went over to help Mike clean up and check out. When the project was nearing completion, John took the kids to his apartment and Daddy and I sat on the back dorm steps visiting while the final checkout was completed.

We were sitting there in the cool but pleasant evening when all at once the "Y" on the hill was lit. It was clearly visible through the trees around Heritage Halls and we couldn't help but feel a little nostalgia at the sight and the many memories surrounding it.

Our trip home Friday reminded me of the many trips we used to take in the little blue station wagon. Remember the time we pulled into the driveway and David climbed out of the back and said, "Get me out of here before I die of obnoxiation!" Well, this trip was just about that bad since we had all of Mike's and some of John's stuff and all our own suitcases and coolers and pillows.

Daddy had secured Mike's bike to the top of the car with bungie cords and we had that to worry about, too. On one occasion an enormous truck pulled alongside us and motioned to Daddy that we had a problem with our load. We pulled off, adjusted things, and continued on. Again, a passing vehicle motioned to us to check our load and we pulled over again. One time we could hear a bungee cord banging against the car and we pulled over to fix that. By the time we had made several stops, we were all ready to give the bike away to anyone who might come along, but we persisted and eventually made it home.

This past week Mike has been sorting through everything he owns and trying to get things ready to store or discard. We have also spent a fair share of time pouring over his mission instructions making sure that we have accounted for every detail of his preparations. I think we are going to make it, if we can just survive the upcoming weekend.

Last Wednesday I spent part of the day with Shauntel on my mind. I knew that she and Randy would be receiving word of the results of the en vitro procedure and I wondered how they were doing with the wait. Wednesday evening Stephani called and commented that she had been thinking about Shauntel all day. When she voiced the same feelings I had been having, I decided to call them.

Randy was home but Shauntel was at YW. Randy said that the test had come back negative. I ask him how they were doing and he said they had spent the day together and were doing all right. They thought it would be better to inform the family after our busy weekend.

Sometimes it is hard to see the future and just what life will bring, but I know the Lord hears prayers and in His own time and way, He answers. We are looking forward to visiting when Shauntel and Randy fly home

in June for Paul's graduation.

[Dad] Life has been so hectic lately that the old stress-induced back spasms have returned. With Mom giving you the scoop on graduation last week, I don't have much to add. I was so impressed with Merrill Bateman's talk at commencement. He is certainly going to be a dynamic leader as the "Y" heads into the next century.

One of the things he talked about was what he termed "Pres. (Rex) Lee's final gift" to the university. He told about Pres. Lee leaving Provo in January in a wheel chair and on oxygen to fly to Denver to argue a BYU housing case with the ACLU before the District Court. He told of all the commotion and activity during preceding proceedings.

When Pres. Lee addressed the court, everything came to a halt to witness the master and his recitation of relevant cases and justification of BYU's stance on the issue. I don't think there was a dry eye in the audience as he completed his description of that event.

Pres. Hinckley also gave a great speech on "civility" and decried the crassness and lack of civility in our society today. I was proud of our graduating bachelor and master and recalled that the total is now up to 14 BYU degrees in our immediate family. That should be some kind of record!

May 6, 1996

[Mom] I've been thinking of the lyrics "he's making a list and checking it twice" lately because it's seemed like that has been what Mike and I have been doing each morning, noon, and night. It's amazing how many details there are to take care of. Mike is in town again this afternoon picking up grooming supplies, thank you notes, and batteries, and tonight we need to pick up his suit and raincoat in Pocatello.

It's good to have the weekend over and feel good about it. It was so fun to have Kathy and Dick come Saturday night and have a chance to visit with them. We spent the day preparing salad's, fencing, mowing lawn, and changing beds. Saturday evening five girls from Mike's ward arrived and he and John and Tim took them out to the farm to see the potato operation. Paul had prom that evening and we enjoyed helping him get ready. We got some cute pictures.

A little later some other friends dropped by and soon the party moved out to the basketball hoops. About 11:30 Becky, Kathy and Dick and I heard the back door open and someone go downstairs. We assumed it was some of Mike's friends and we continued visiting. In a few minutes one of Paul's friends and his date (dressed in formal attire) poked his head around the corner of the living room and asked, "Where's Paul?"

Paul's prom group were having an after-dance party and Micah and his date had failed to find out where and assumed it was at our house. Seeing all the cars and commotion outside they had parked and came in to join the crowd. Only when they went downstairs and found no one in prom attire did they realize that this was A party but not THEIR party! They felt kind of sheepish about walking in without knocking. We got a good laugh out of it anyway.

Paul and I attended the Elks annual awards dinner Wednesday and he received a $500 scholarship from the lodge. We didn't know until it was announced which award he had won and it was a pretty thrilling moment. We have certainly been the recipients of the Elk's many youth awards and we appreciate their kindnesses to us. I have met a lot of Elks and I feel like they are a good bunch of men who are working towards the betterment of the community.

Daddy's orchestra concert was Thursday

night. It was such a thrill to see how the orchestra has grown in size and proficiency this past year. I thought it would be hard to find a small community like ours anywhere in the world that could come up with an orchestra. I am constantly amazed at the talent in this region and grateful to be able to raise my family where the values of love of God, hard work, development of talent, and service to community are so important.

Yesterday after all the hubbub of the meeting and dinner died down, Daddy and I visited about the weekend and impressions we received. I told him that one of my biggest concerns when I am in the middle of all the busyness is that I'm too busy to hear the Spirit. Later I find out I have slipped up because of my preoccupation with other things.

I had that experience Sunday. All week long I had been trying to figure out how to approach the subject matter, "If Ye Are Prepared, Ye Shall Not Fear". As I read the conference talk I began to jot down ideas. I kept trimming and rewriting it. Part way through my preparation as I was thinking about Elder Perry's counsel to encourage children to work at projects around the yard and home, I had the thought come of what wonderful examples our neighbors are of this principle. I thought I might mention the Hanni's and their worming, the Ellis's and their livestock project, and the Brent Young's and their resourcefulness with cars and machinery. I knew that the Young's wouldn't be there in the meeting because they have been totally inactive forever but nevertheless I felt like I wanted to mention them.

Eventually I dropped the idea. Sunday I gave my talk. Daddy and I and Mike had been so careful with our time that when we were through the Bishop had more time than we had planned on. He did a fine job but I regretted not including a few more ideas that I had thought about saying.

Later that afternoon, Mike asked me if I had noticed that Autumn Young had been in attendance at the meeting. I was shocked! Apparently, she has started taking the missionary lessons and knew and respected Mike and came to the meeting. How I wished I had followed up on my impression and mentioned their family. I think it would have been a sweet experience for her to hear their family mentioned and praised.

I've received several phone calls from Grandma Richards this past week regarding Grandpa. He's had a reaction to the steroids and his blood sugar has gone up to 700. The doctor immediately had him put in the hospital to stabilize him. He is still in the hospital and his sugar level is still fluctuating. At this point no one really knows what is going on.

Uncle Charles and family spent the weekend with Grandma and Charles spent some time with the tests trying to figure out what is going on but he is as stumped by it all as Grandpa's doctor is. Aunt Deniece is there with Grandma for a few days and has been good support for her through all this. Our prayers are for Grandpa. I appreciate my siblings and their care for Grandpa and Grandma. It is hard for me to be so far away.

Shauntel called last night to bid Mike farewell. I had a chance to visit and felt so good about her and Randy and their sweet acceptance of the events in their lives. I sense that they have been visited with the Comforter and many of their fears and concerns have been put to rest.

It has always been of interest to me that even in the toughest of times, we can see the Lord working in our lives and know that He is aware of us in our struggles. It is comforting to know that even though miles may separate us, our prayers are answered and our loved ones are blessed with the help they need to pull them through.

We are nearly ready for our trek to Provo and Tempe. SaraKay is feeling a little sick and I have been concerned for the arrangements I have made for her care. I have been thinking about asking Daddy to administer to her to help her get through this next week. She is struggling already because of the wild weeks we have already had. It's exciting for her but it takes its toll, too.

[Dad] These past weeks have certainly been hectic and filled with pressure. It's been a joy to work with my boys Saturday doing some fencing and yard work. As we sat down to dinner, the "four little boys" were on one side of the table and certainly are not very little any more. They can sure devour the groceries!

Mike's farewell was a rewarding day. We were pleased with the friends and relatives who shared the day with us. Preparations were a little simpler by using Sam's Club instead of brisket. I would like to share a Maxwellian sentence from my talk with you. *"Preparedness as a prophetic principle prevents pain and perpetuates our progress on the path to our divine potential."* How important it is for us to be prepared physically and spiritually for whatever comes our way. Many things are difficult to anticipate but spiritual preparedness is a safety net that carries us through everything.

May 13, 1996

[Mom]I just finished interviewing with Sandra Kelly with the Morning News. She called yesterday and asked me if she could interview me over the phone, but I told her that if she could give me the questions and let me have the evening, I would prefer having her come tomorrow and do it in person. She agreed. We had a nice visit. Hopefully, she will give me a good write-up and I won't come across too stupid.

Tonight there is a board meeting and I'm going to go and get a feel for how things run even though I am not officially on the board. I learned from the district newsletter that there will be no election held in Zone 4 since I am running unopposed. I guess they have made some write-in stipulations and since no one met those, there will not be opportunity for a write-in candidate to come in at the last minute. I am learning a lot and hopefully I will continue doing so.

I am enclosing our first letter from Mike in the MTC. He was so ready to go! He had accompanied several friends to the MTC and he pretty much knew what was going to be said and done and he also knew all the punch lines to all the talks and smiled knowingly when the audience responded just the way the speakers knew we would.

At one point in the MTC counselor's remarks, he asked the missionaries to all stand up so we could see them. Mike was ready for that request and he popped up like a piece of bread in a toaster. It was nice to have him so excited. John was able to be there for the good-byes and I wondered if he was envious or sympathetic towards Mike's coming adventure. Probably a little of both. We were in such a hurry to get to the airport that we didn't have much time to visit with John but he assured us that "all was well" for him.

We were delayed so long at the MTC that we came within 15 minutes of missing our plane. When we parked in long term parking, we knew there was a shuttle but we weren't sure where. All at once we spotted it coming and we both took off running, me in high heels and Daddy to two big suitcases. We probably looked funny but we were so concerned about making connections that we didn't care. Once we were aboard the plane and situated, we settled back to enjoy the hour flight.

David was waiting for us and it was fun to be on that end of the corridor for a change. Phoenix was sprawling and hot, but we

thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to see that part of the country and share graduation festivities with Dave and Andrea and the Cottams. We attended a MHA banquet and met many of David's professors and associates. We toured the temple grounds and went to the zoo. We attended graduation at ASU and a buffet afterwards and we played with Laurel and Angela and enjoyed the chance to become reacquainted with them. They are wonderful little girls (just like all the rest of our grandchildren!). It pleased us that Laurel kept saying "Idaho" instead of "Texas" although we're innocent of any attempt to promote Idaho over Texas.

We had several hours with Jeanie and Scot and Miken and Lyman following Miken's convocation. We took lots of pictures the day of graduation and shed a few tears as we thought about the Lord's watch care over Dave and Andrea in their graduate school venture.

There were two events that were my favorites and indicative of their stay in Arizona. The first was the opportunity to get acquainted with their Korean friends, Chang and Sun and their daughter, Jenny. What a thrill to see the bond of love that exists between them and to sense the care that has been given to that relationship and their delicate testimonies.

The second experience was on Friday night as we sat around on the floor (all the furniture was gone) and visited about the upcoming changes for their family. A knock came at the door and David reached over and opened it. Although I was sitting so I couldn't see who it was, it was obvious that it was someone special. Immediately David and Andrea both were at the door, David speaking Spanish to a beautiful young Hispanic couple. They were going door to door selling tamales and they were on a first name basis with Dave and Andrea.

It was a pleasant exchange and sweet to see the love and consideration they were given. David paid for two tamales but when the couple realized that they were moving they heaped several more on the plate and wished them well. Apparently, the missionaries hadn't yet contacted them but David gave them the missionaries address and committed them to make contact and hear the gospel. Andrea gave the wife a bag of groceries and food that needed to be disposed of because of their move and she was very appreciative of their generosity. It was heart-warming to witness to goodness that they have extended over their time in Tempe and the host of friends they had influenced.

It was a pretty teary good-bye at the airport. Some people say "it's a small world after all" but right now it seems pretty big and Dallas, a long way away!

I have felt these past few weeks that when everything was over, I would like to find a private spot and have a good cry. I'm not exactly sure what I would be crying about but I suspect it would include all the sad and joyous events we have experienced lately. I guess it would have to include my feelings for my Dad and his deteriorating condition, all the good-byes, all the relief of graduations, jobs secured, semester's completed, scholarships earned, and the goodness of friends and loved ones over the past months as we have tried to stay calm in the midst of it all. Anyway, it has been a pretty emotional time.

We came home Saturday morning to find everything in order and kids happy. We were concerned about SaraKay but we really felt that the blessing Daddy gave her before we left helped her to cope with the separation. Paul and Tim managed fine but it was good to be home. Except for the flight home where we had the interesting experience of sitting next to a "born again" Christian who wouldn't quit talking about the rally he had attended in Phoenix that weekend and making derogatory remarks

about "organized religion," we had a joyous trip.

Last night Paul and I spent several hours on scholarship forms and "senior" business. All the end-of-year festivities are beginning!

May 20, 1996

[Mom]Running for the school board has brought a new dimension to my life. I have been approached in public places by strangers who want to express their opinions on various issues, been teased by people about being a "politician," and have received calls from patrons, administrators, and teachers about a variety of concerns. Last Wednesday I was on the phone so much that I nearly cleaned every cupboard in the kitchen before I was through listening and uh-huhing.

It has been both interesting and challenging. I have tried to be a listening ear and unbiased in my conversations. I realize that there is much about the workings of the district that I don't understand and I am honest with people about that. I have tried to not form opinions without hearing both sides and I have also been guarded in what I say about any school employee as I realize how quickly things can be passed on and even twisted from their original meaning.

One of the nice things about my situation is that I am running unopposed and I have not had to campaign. I thank Grandpa Larsen for that. The day I was approached about running, I called Grandpa and asked his advice and he told me to go to the one who presently held the position and find out if he was going to run again. It had been rumored that he was ready to quit but had turned in a petition since no one else had filed. I called Chris Jensen and he said he would withdraw if I was interested in running. I know that Grandpa's advice has saved me a lot of time and money.

We were proud of Paul and Tim for their efforts in reading their scriptures. Paul was one of 21 who completed his 1333 goal and Tim was one of only four students who play on the school's basketball teams who received an award. Tim received word that he's been accepted in a Capella choir for next year and he seems pleased with that. He attends early morning basketball class each day and Daddy and Paul have been going in at six each morning to practice swimming. This week Paul will attend a five-hour first aid and CPR class at the hospital. His summer job has required a lot of him already and he is excited about it. He leaves the Monday following graduation and will be gone until the second week in August.

We hope to hear from David and Andrea soon as they are in transit from Arizona to Dallas-- somewhere. We hope their trip is without incident but traveling for three days with two pre-schoolers is never very fun. Becky called to get their address but they don't have one yet. In fact, I noticed on my family address list that since last year, everyone but Steph and Shauntel has a different address this year. Come July, Steph will have a new one, too. This is certainly a momentous time of our lives with many of you children getting graduated and settled.

Today in the paper was a cartoon showing a graduate looking at the want ads and finding only jobs for cooks and janitors available. It was referring to the disappointment of many students who graduate and don't find good employment. We have been so grateful that you children have good jobs. It's been nice for John to have Steve's old job and be enjoying the good pay and benefits as well as the accolades that were showered on Steve in his time there.

Becky, too, is enjoying her employment at the alternate school and interviewed today regarding staying on for fall. I wish she

would write and share some of her experiences. She is learning so much and has seen a side of life she hadn't seen before.

[Dad It's] been fun for Paul and me to go swimming together in the mornings. We have increased from staggering through 16 laps with resting at each end of the pool to swimming straight through without a rest and feeling good at the end instead of ready to pass out. I can feel the difference in my body and I have lost about eight pounds so far.

Last week when Sue was involved in a school board meeting, I went downstairs and had a good visit with Tim in his room and then visited with Paul and worked with him on a Literature assignment. It was nice to be in a position to do that and to be fulfilled in a nurturing role.

We bought some trees at a Pheasants Forever leftover tree sale at Payless parking lot on Saturday. They are pretty good sized and we are happy to improve our landscaping. Last night we planted the two largest—Austrian Pines—and are pleased. They each weighed about a hundred pounds and required a pretty good-sized hole.

Last week I irrigated the pasture for the first time in several years. It was interesting to be up during the night checking the water and shutting the head gate at the canal when we were done. It is a real blessing to live where we have a plentitude of water for our needs. To prepare for the snow melting and spring runoff this year, they have almost totally drained Palisades Reservoir and the river has been higher than it has been for years. Let me close with a thought from Cato the Elder, *"Cessation of work is not accompanied by cessation of expenses."*

May 27, 1996

[Dad] We were able to upgrade the memory and mother board on the new computer with hardware Steve bought for us that we picked up in Salt Lake last Thursday. But then, it wouldn't communicate with the hard drive, so I decided to swap hard drives from our old computer.

The Hanni's expressed the desire to buy our old computer and I had to clean up all the files, back up files, take out the hard drive and install the other drive, restore files, load programs, swap 5 ¼" drives because the old one didn't work and many of the programs had to be loaded from 5 ¼" disks, change CMOS and XCMOS, and get it ready for the Hanni's.

Then I had to get the new computer up and running by restoring files, installing programs, changing 5 ¼" drives back, installing the Hard drive, reinstalling CD-ROM, installing printer, and so on. It has taken hours to do and I have learned a lot as I have had to face and solve one problem after another in the process. But all in all, now that it is done, I am proud that I was able to handle such a technical project.

The Hanni's have never had a computer and they are really excited about getting one so cheaply. I have the documentation for about every program that goes with that computer and printer and we are giving them a counter top that can be made into a computer table as well. Mom is excited to get some of the equipment out of her office so she has a work area again. I am pleased with our new system and it should serve us well for many years to come.

What is my next project? I haven't decided yet. The biggest problem is that most of these projects I embark on cost money and that is still in short supply.

We are waiting for word from Dave and Andrea regarding their new address. They called last week from Plano and were staying in a motel while they searched for an apartment.

Last Thursday we took a quick trip to Salt Lake in the Council pickup to get a large commercial bread mixer for the Tiger Ear booth that had been there for repair since last year's Fair. We had a little visit with Kathy at her work, went out to dinner at an Arctic Circle, and then went to Steve and Bonnie's for a short visit.

We brought a couple of the Marlow children home with us to help preserve the parents' sanity. They are staying in the Ronald McDonald house while their son Brady (3 years old) is in the burn center. The doctors have had a rough time getting the skin grafts to take hold on the back side of his knee. Thank goodness all three kids slept most of the way home. We made it back in time to conduct and sing for Matt Gardner's Eagle Court of Honor that night.

Wednesday night was the spring concert for a Capella choir. We were thoroughly delighted with the performance. John Grayson has done a wonderful job with the vocal music program at the high school this year. The pieces they performed were very difficult but performed with excellence and polish hardly equaled in previous choirs.

We have been touched with the letters Mike has sent home. He is a wonderful missionary with some of the same struggles with companions that every missionary goes through. He is deeply committed, working hard, and having some wonderful spiritual experiences. He could use your letters, prayers and encouragement.

[Mom] We've had a busy but pleasant day today. We received so much rain over the weekend that there hasn't been any way to get our garden planted or rototilled. It's been frustrating; I know what kind of a week we have ahead of us and I was hoping to get the garden going.

Daddy's computer project has been extensive. I never cease being amazed at his ability to figure things out and put things back together. He has really put a lot of hours into upgrading our system and now I need to put in some time learning how to use it.

Hannis are so delighted to get a computer! Last week she called and mentioned that she had found a history of her grandmother's that had been tucked away in some old books. She was in the process of retyping it all. I suggested that if she wanted to use our computer to type it that I was going to be home for the morning and she was welcome to come and let me help her on the computer.

She was in awe of the difference in the typewriter and the computer. It was fun to teach her about the functions and see how nice her paper turned out. She mentioned then that they had wanted a computer but just knew that they couldn't afford several thousand dollars for one. When I said that we would be selling ours for considerably less, she voiced an interest and we were happy to see it go to such a good home.

We have played the role of parents sometimes in our relationships with that family because they have not had much experience in technology and educational things. Neither of the parents attended any college and yet they are very talented and bright. I've talked to Melanie about college for the kids and we are doing all we can to show them how to make it happen.

I received a phone call from Grandma Ilene a few days ago and she said that Grandpa is doing better. He has been able to walk a little and seems to be strengthening.

She said that Don and Deniece's son, Bradley, suffered another stroke which left one side of his face paralyzed. He has been listless and sleeping sometimes 20 hours a day. The doctors have done a lot of tests and feel that there is nothing they can do for him. He is seven years old and has had a normal life to this point but the prognosis doesn't look good. He realizes that he

might die and seems to feel a comfort knowing that his Grandpa Cheney is in heaven waiting for him.

I called Deniece Sunday and she is doing amazingly well. She commented, "I want what the Lord wants". When he had his first stroke at three weeks old, the doctors felt he wouldn't last long, but they have had seven wonderful years with him and they feel grateful for that. Please remember them in your prayers.

We made a trip to Idaho Falls yesterday to put flowers on Grandma Gooch 's grave and then went to visit Grandma Larsen's. It always gives me cause to ponder about the goodness of their lives and the influence they have had on mine. Seeing the decorated graves also reminds me again of the ongoing cycle of life and of the sorrows born by so many. It kind of puts things in perspective.

June 3,1996

[Mom] It is a truly beautiful summer day outside today, a welcome relief from the cold and wind we have experienced the past month. I've spent most of the day inside, clearing away the rubble from a busy weekend. Daddy had another Wood Badge overnighter on Friday and left about five. He had had a stressful two days with all the final arrangements for the big Scouting Heritage Society extravaganza on Saturday.

Paul's final Chambers' concert was Friday and Saturday and it was fun to see Paul's original composition, "The Gorilla of Love," performed by a male quartet with Paul at the piano both playing and singing.

Part of the act included a costumed gorilla coming down the aisle spotlighted and then dancing around on the stage. Mike's famous gorilla mask was embellished with one ping pong ball painted like an eyeball and hanging from the eye socket. I will spare you any more details of this popular number but the audience had a good laugh and Paul felt rewarded for his efforts. Mr. Grayson said that the song had become a kind of theme song of the group and that in class whenever spirits were sagging, Paul and Merritt would get up to the piano and liven things up with that song.

Saturday Tim had a basketball tournament and had his first experience playing with the JV team. He did a great job and it was obvious that the older boys respected his abilities and were willing to include him in the play.

Daddy and I were scheduled to arrive in American Falls at three for the scouting event and so the day was pretty wild. Complicating the events was the expected arrival of Jeanie and Scott and family from Arizona. Their kids are close to ours and we had arranged for them to stay here, but that meant getting downstairs ready, meals prepared ahead, and added stress. By the time we arrived in American Falls, we both were feeling pretty up tight. Let me describe the event.

Several months ago, some friends of Brad Allen built an enormous home on the shore of the American Falls reservoir. It's about 15,000 square feet, has four levels, and featured about eight bathrooms, a grandchildren's room with a bed for each grandchild (names carved into the headboards) private library, three guest bedrooms, movie theatre, bar, cobblestone driveway, three-story-high glass windows overlooking the reservoir, a beautifully landscaped yard, fully equipped alarm system, four-car garage, expensive antiques, and white oak imported from the east coast. It was just completed a few months ago and they offered to host an open house, tour of an antique car collection, boat rides, and a steak dinner for the scout council.

Daddy was in charge of making all the arrangements including sending out

invitations to a very select group of wealthy Idahoans who are prospective donors to the Boy Scouts. Of those invited, over 80 came and it was a wonderful success. Daddy had several awards he gave out and Brad took advantage of the opportunity to talk about Scouting and the influence for good it can have. Daddy and I were door greeters and facilitators throughout the six-hour open house.

It was an interesting occasion. I told Daddy later as we drove home that some of the people obviously had been affected by their wealth whereas others were cordial and sweet to me despite the fact that I was not one of the rich and famous guests.

When we first arrived and walked up to the front door, a sweet looking, modestly dressed woman answered and smiled and invited us in. I thought she had such a sweet look to her and I repented of all my nervousness about the occasion. A few minutes later I realized that this woman was the maid and not the "lady of the house" and I felt a little sheepish. When the hostess did appear, she was not overly gracious or kind and I couldn't help feeling a little awkward. Luckily as the evening went on, several guests, including Grandpa and AlvaLu, put me at ease and it was a fun experience. It has caused me to reflect about money and its effect on people and their perceptions of themselves and others.

One rather upsetting event was when an elderly gentleman missed a small step and fell to the pavement and cut the back of his head open. His son and I knelt on the sidewalk holding his bleeding head while an ambulance was called. Luckily, he suffered nothing more than a bad cut that required stitches. After his trip to the hospital he again joined the party and carried on. We were grateful that it wasn't worse.

We arrived home at 9:30 to a very noisy house of cousins and the noise didn't quit until after 1:00 a.m. I had a speaking assignment for the next day and so after our meetings I hurried home, finished preparations for dinner, and went back to speak to the Moreland Third YW group.

Following dinner we went to Grandpa and Grandmas to visit with Scott and Jeanie. We had regional choir at six and another houseful of company until midnight with Paul and Christian and some friends from scout camp.

We have heard from most of you these past weeks and feel grateful that graduations are over and that you are all well and healthy. Our letters this past week from Mike and Becky were very touching and we shed a tear or two.

P.S. Bradley seems to be doing better this week. So does Grandpa. That's great news! Keep the faith.

[Dad] Tonight for home evening we worked together in the garden. I had a little struggle getting the tiller to run, but after tinkering with it awhile it finally coughed and started running. We planted corn, onions, and potatoes tonight and Mom will probably finish the last few rows that we have left tomorrow with SaraKay's help. Root Beer and Rice Crispy treats capped off the evening.

We had a special fast and testimony meeting yesterday with both Brother and Sister Tominaga bearing their testimonies. They had gone to the temple on Saturday to be sealed as a family and had a great experience. Brother Alvarez blessed his third son and did part of it in Spanish and there were some Spanish families there to show support. We were also privileged to hear a sweet testimony from Paul as it was probably his last opportunity to bear his testimony in the ward for quite a while. It is hard to accept that his days around here are numbered—that with working at SRHAB, college, and mission that he is virtually on his way.

June 11, 1996

[Mom] Life has seemed especially busy this past week with all of Paul's senior activities and preparations for his summer job. He spent two days with instructors from ISU teaching them all sorts of outdoor skills and also spent more time in the kayaks. He has thoroughly enjoyed the training he is getting. Next Monday Daddy, Shauntel, and Randy will accompany the staff to Salmon to help set up camp and spend a night there before returning home. It will be fun for Shauntel and Randy to get to see that camp and the beautiful setting.

I can't imagine life without Paul. I am even having a hard time remember that Mike is gone. Lately I find myself putting too many plates on the dinner table, waiting for him to come in at night before turning out the garage light, and just assuming that he will be joining us for family events. I am always reminding myself that Mike isn't coming home for a while and Shauntel said that she had been having the same thought processes. Since coming home she's just wondering, "Where's Mike?" We have really appreciated Mike's wonderful letters and look forward to them each week. He has quite a talent for writing and we can sense from the things he writes that he is trying to do his best and make the most of this opportunity.

Sunday night we attended Baccalaureate with Shauntel and Paul. Grandpa was the speaker and Paul performed in two quartets. Prior to the service, the quartet came to our house to practice one last time. They invited us into the living room to hear them perform their number. Following that performance, they began to sing songs that they had done over the last four years of high school, especially the ones they sang in "The Music Man."

I became a little emotional as we took that trip down memory lane and realized that it was all coming to an end. Paul has some exceptionally fine friends (as did all of you) and we are going to miss having them in our home.

A few weeks ago, Tim made the comment that he didn't feel like he even knew his older siblings. It made me sad to think that he felt that way. Having Shauntel here has been such a fun experience. Last night we all went to the mall shopping for Paul's graduation gift and then Paul and Tim and Shauntel walked over to play some tennis. It was fun to see the three of them walking down the road, visiting, and enjoying being together. Our times together are so short that we relish every minute.

The other night Shauntel and Daddy and I had been visiting and about 11:00 Daddy went into bed. We kept visiting and finally got to bed about 2:30 a. m. When Daddy roused as I was getting into bed, he couldn't believe how late it was and questioned me on it the next morning. I had to admit that our times for visiting (without long distance fees) are so rare that we just couldn't say good-night. What a treat to have Shauntel a part of our family again.

On the way to the mall, Paul commented that we ought to stop at Gross Me Out-let. It is really Grocery Outlet, but the kids have always used the other name just for fun. Shauntel started to laugh at the joke and I had to comment that it was nice having someone around to laugh at all our worn-out jokes. It made me realize how separate our lives are in little ways even though we try to keep touch.

Sunday we participated in a regional conference. The visitors were Stuart Grow, Richard G. Scott, and L. Tom Perry. The message of conference was to strengthen our families. They stressed the importance of mothers being in the home with their families and of each member doing their part to help make the family functional. L. Tom Perry spoke of teaching children to

work and I couldn't help but reflect back on my childhood and the emphasis my folks put on work. Same with Daddy's family. You children have been raised the same way and I feel like most of what you have accomplished has been because you weren't afraid to get in and work hard to accomplish your goals.

Daddy and I have been asked to do a stake seminar in October on parenting. I sat and compared what was said in the conference with what we had given in the last seminar we did on parenting and I felt comforted to know that we were on target with our advice.

Today is "First Grade Day" for SaraKay. She will not be coming home at noon but will spend the entire day at school, even eating school lunch and having recesses. It's going to be quite a change for me to have her gone all day. My life is certainly in a period of transition. Sometimes it hurts and I struggle to keep my equilibrium, but most of the time I try to adjust and move on. One thing about life...it moves so quickly that it's important that we do the right things right now or we may procrastinate and fail to gain the blessings. We are grateful that each of you are centering your lives around gospel living.

We finally had a chance last week to get our garden planted. Several weeks ago, despite the application of Caseron to the raspberries, the quack grass began to come and I lamented to Daddy that I just didn't know what to do to keep it under control. He commented that the patch was hopeless and he wanted to go out and rototill it all under and start fresh.

Knowing how long it takes a patch to become productive and how hard I had worked to get my little patch growing, I couldn't face destroying it. I went out the next morning and assessed the situation again and decided to dig up all the good starts, transplant them in clean ground where the other berries were doing well and then let Daddy destroy the problem area. I spent several hours carefully locating, then digging up good plants and then transplanting them. Each day I watered them and pulled out any foreign material. They are doing fine and we have pretty much eradicated the grass that was such a menace before.

During the process of saving the good shoots, I thought of all the Savior's teachings and Book of Mormon references to planting, sowing, reaping, and other references to grafts and gardeners. Those sweet stories filled my mind as I labored over my own vineyard and I gained a renewed appreciation for the Lord's love for his people and all his efforts to restore them to righteousness. I thought of the transplanting of the Nephites and Jaredites and of the removal of these people from the wickedness around them. I thought of Abraham's plea to the Lord that if he could find only 10 righteous souls in Sodom and Gomorrah, would the Lord be willing to spare the cities? How grateful I am for the scriptures and the beautiful parables and analogies that help us understand our relationship to the Lord. Make them a part of your life.

June 17, 1996

[Dad] This week we've had a strong dose of family and it has been sweet! Seminary graduation for Paul was Wednesday night. The four that spoke did an awesome job and really brought the spirit. They had an early morning testimony meeting before school instead of a late night one after the graduation exercises. Paul sang in a group and it sounded so beautiful.

Thursday, Shauntel went to SLC to pick up Randy and they were back in time for Paul's graduation. It was the best graduation exercise SRHS has had for years. The administration, under direction from the school board, set a dress code

and behavior standard that was appropriate for the occasion and there weren't any scenes with spray string, bare feet, beach ball being thrown around, and bubble blowing. Paul did a great job with his Valedictory address and received many compliments. Just as we were filing out of the gym, the power went off and everyone had to shuffle out slowly. The kids had an all-night party that was a huge success.

Friday night was our Father and Sons outing to Sportsman's park in Aberdeen. It was wonderful for me to have Steve, John, Paul and Tim able to join us. I especially appreciated all their help in setting up and running games and in cooking breakfast. We had a pretty good crowd, but I was disappointed in the number of people that indicated they would come and didn't. Bishop Godfrey was the only member of the Bishopric who attended and he couldn't stay overnight.

When life gets as hectic as it has been the last couple of months I feel like it is easier to do things myself than delegate. I know I took too much on for this activity. Hopefully I can regroup now and get back in charge of my life.

Saturday night we had family time with good food, home-made ice cream, and volleyball. Paul and his friends had dates and their plans had to be changed because of the weather, so they joined in the volleyball. As Sunday dawned, Father's Day was a special time. I appreciated the cards, gifts, and phone calls from each of you. The thoughts and expressions of love and the time spent together is one of the greatest rewards of parenthood.

The thought for today in my planner is, *"The best thing to spend on children is your time."* Arnold Glasgow was sure on track with that thought. The converse is also true—the best thing for children to spend on their parents is a little of their time. A small investment in time will produce great returns in solid relationships of love, mutual respect, and friendship. My favorite friends are my wife and my children and there isn't anyone I would rather spend time with.

[Mom] As Daddy recounted, we had a fun weekend with family here. It was also fun for us to have Shauntel here and to join us for many of Paul's graduation activities.

Paul had another training Saturday so he drove home from father-son outing early Saturday morning and left again for part of the day. Yesterday he caught a ride to Little Lemhi where he will be helping in the commissary for the week until he leaves for Salmon River next Monday. This is an interesting summer with so many of you coming and going.

Becky and I spent some time with wedding plans. The date has tentatively been set for October 18th. They will be married in the Idaho Falls Temple at 9:30 a.m. Of course, this is subject to change if they decide differently when he returns the first of August. Becky seems to feel good about it and we certainly feel like he is a fine young man.

Today is Tim's birthday and we are going to have some friends over to float the canal. Tomorrow is Steve and David's. June has been a big birthday month including Andrea, Jonie, Katie, Angela, and Rachel.

We appreciated your remembrances of Daddy yesterday. During sacrament meeting I thought about my own two fathers and their sweet influence in my life. I also thought about Daddy and all that he does to make life so good for you children. He is certainly an example of what a father should be and a good role model for each of you sons.

Last night after everyone had gone home, Tim and SaraKay were playing at the neighbors for a while, and Daddy and I just sat in the living room, rehearsing the week

and the joys of our family. It is a wonderful thing to have such a closeness with my companion and to feel like he is my best friend. We enjoy our times together and relish the opportunity to share our lives with each other.

[Mom] I just got Becky off for Provo. We have spent the last three days (excluding Sunday) making wedding plans and visiting with caterers, shop keepers, and florists about ideas for the wedding. It has been a lot of years since we had a wedding in this family, and I'd almost forgotten how many details there are.

Becky's arrival Friday night overlapped with Shauntel and Randy's departure. We shared a nice family dinner, had one last good visit, and then drove them to Blackfoot to Archibald's for the night. They left early the next morning for Salt Lake and arrived in Iowa later that evening. We so enjoyed our visit with them. Having them here we realized how much we miss them and how hard it is to have them so far away.

David and Andrea are finally settled in and feeling more at home in Plano. They recently purchased two bikes and a tram that attaches to the back of the bikes and they spent part of last Saturday biking on the 27-mile biker trail that adjoins their back yard. They said there were numerous parks at intervals along the way and it was a pleasant family outing. They are adjusting to their new ward and attended the temple last week.

Monday morning Paul left for the Salmon River High Adventure Base. He spent the previous week helping in the commissary at Little Lemhi and though they tried to persuade him to stay for the summer, he was anxious to leave for Salmon. I have had some reservations about the job. Because of record snow falls and a sudden hot spell, the melting snow created record high flows in the Snake and Salmon Rivers and people have been warned to use extreme caution in their fishing and boating. I have never seen the Snake River as high as it is this year and the thought of Paul being in the river every day scares me. Daddy reassured me that the bulk of the runoff is past, but I know I will worry until he returns in August.

The camp schedule was pushed back a week so now he will not be home until one week before he leaves for Ricks. That will be a hectic but exciting time for him. After our weekly scheduling session Sunday night, Daddy gave both Paul and Becky a blessing. It was a sweet experience.

We received word of Mike's travel plans. He will be leaving the Salt Lake airport at 7:10 a.m. on Monday, July 8th. Our plan at this point is to drive to Salt Lake on the seventh, stay with Steve and Bonnie that night and then be to the airport by 6 a.m. the next morning. We thought that if Bonnie wanted to go and Steve couldn't because of work that we could help Bonnie with Rachel and Nathan.

Our letters from Mike are always interesting and he seems to be successful in coping with the stress of missionary life and learning a language. He has such an interesting way of expressing himself in writing that we have relished each weekly letter. We were especially pleased to know that the language is starting to come. Our prayers are with you, Mike!

Grandpa and Grandma Richards called for an update yesterday and they seem to be doing well. Grandpa is walking with a cane now instead of his walker or wheelchair. The new medication seems to be making a lot of difference and we are grateful that the doctor has found something that can give him a better quality of life.

Last week Uncle Delos and Aunt Pat visited from St. George for a few days and Delos sprayed the weeds in Grandpa's lawn for him. Nate's kids are helping with mowing

and keeping the decorative rocks free of weeds. I'm looking forward to seeing how things look the next time we make the trip. Wish my yard looked as good as I suspect Grandpa and Grandma's does.

When Shauntel was here, she helped me clean out my flower beds, plant the front step pot, and weed the garden. It was a beautiful summer morning and so enjoyable.

Tim is so busy with work lately. A few weeks ago he made phone calls to ward members requesting summer employment and these last two weeks he has had plenty of work to keep him busy. He is going to be hoeing potatoes for several days this week. He leaves at 5:30 a.m. and works until noon. He was really tired when he got home but not as tired as I thought he would be; he headed for the canal with his friends. He has gotten so brown that he could pass for a Hispanic. It seems strange to be down to four in the family. Of course, with the family visits, we haven't had much chance to get lonely yet.

Last Saturday Jenny Taylor passed out at home, was transported to the hospital, and never regained consciousness. She has been struggling with cancer off and on for nearly 13 years but the last year and a half has been very difficult and discouraging. After six weeks of intense bone marrow transplants in Salt Lake, she thought that she would go into remission, but much to everyone's dismay, within a few months the cancer was back.

I visited her in the hospital last Wednesday and as she described her situation, I couldn't help but compare it with the final struggle Grandma Larsen had with her lungs and breathing. I didn't tell Jenny, but what she was describing was just exactly how Grandma felt when her lungs were full of cancer.

Sunday, Jenny died at 2:00 p.m. leaving behind Ray and five children. The ward has been so saddened by it but recognize that she was fortunate to not suffer more. It will be a tough road for Ray and kids as they try to normalize their family life.

P.S. John, Andrea said that if you would try hard to find someone to marry and do it the same week that Becky and Chet do, that she and David would try hard to be here for both weddings. That gives you three and a half months. How's that for pressure! From all we hear from Provo, you are working on it.

July 1, 1996

[Mom] I am battling my monthly headache this morning, but thank goodness my medication makes life tolerable. The medication has given me my life back after reaching a point that nearly a week of every month was spent dragging around, hurting. Now I just have a few hours of bad headache and go through the month headache free. Speaking of headaches; last week we had a sprinkler head strip it's gears and get stuck with the water spraying close to the house. About four o'clock SaraKay and her friend went downstairs to get into their swimming suits and soon came upstairs yelling, "There's water in my room!"

Upon examination I discovered that the window well by the red room was about a foot full of water. Immediately I grabbed a bucket, lowered SaraKay into the window well and she began scooping and handing the bucket to me to empty. This went on for nearly 20 minutes. She was a real trooper.

I would have joined her but the last time I climbed into the window well, I was alone and much to my surprise, I didn't have the strength to pull myself back out. I thought I was going to have to remove my shirt and flag someone down on the road to get help or break a basement window and climb through.

It's times like this that I realize I am not as

young as I used to be. I need to be careful what kind of stupid situations I get into. Anyway, despite the swimming creatures, the daddy long legs on the cement, and gooey mud in the window well, SaraKay kept scooping and we soon had it emptied.

Meanwhile Daddy arrived home and wondered why I was sitting on the ledge of the window well and why SaraKay's blond head was bobbing up and down beneath me. He quickly went downstairs and discovered that both the red and green bedrooms were waterlogged as well as the hall.

The next several hours were spent sucking up the water with a Shop Vac and using a space heater and fan to get things dried out. The red room is alright but the green bedroom isn't, so this morning I called Blacker's to see what it would cost to replace the carpet. Too much!

Last week we found out that the transmission in the van needs to be replaced. All this, the week after we get our farm payment from Gary and Linda. Someday when I die I'm going to ask the Lord if it is merely coincidence that expenses seem to follow the acquisition of wealth or if there is some divine law that dictates that when money is available, a crisis will consume it. Look on the bright side. At least we do have the resources to help get through the crises.

Last week we actually got some yard work done. Daddy finished up the spraying, we weeded the garden, got things watered, and trimmed and weeded the front trees.

We also planted a row of fast-growing shade trees along the back of the property. We have wanted to get a patio but the evening sun is so unbearable that even if we had a patio we wouldn't want to be out there. The pine trees are doing well but they will not provide much shade for years to come.

One of our friends mentioned that he was going to get some starts and asked if we wanted some. We were delighted with the offer and so Friday night we planted the "twigs" across the back of the yard. The Hannis saw the activity and came over to inquire as to just what was going on. We explained that these trees were supposed to grow about 10 feet a year and be so thick that they could be trimmed for a hedge.

We could see their disbelief. Now we have our ego into this project so we are out there every day watering and talking to our "twigs" and praying each night that they will grow.

When we were wondering where to put them, Daddy commented that perhaps we ought to fence off an area in the pasture. I suggested inside the back fence on the grass. Daddy was hesitant to reduce the size of our back yard but I reminded him that we don't need as big a back yard as we used to. That's the name of the game we have been playing around here; downsizing our life. It's hard to do. Too many years of dealing with "growing pains".

We had a wild Sunday yesterday and when we finally got home about 9:30 last night, Tim said that Paul had called and needed to talk to us. I could see that Tim was worrying about Paul and so I made a phone call to see what was happening. Paul had had the usual tough first week with the adjustment to new tent mates and the rigors of the kayaking and river runs and was homesick.

He had thought he was arriving on time for his block of meetings on Sunday only to discover that Sacrament meeting was the last of their meetings and they had missed Priesthood and Sunday School. The only day they are in town to do their laundry was Sunday and that was hard to feel good about. Following church, the staff scattered to find a place to eat but Paul and a friend

didn't feel good about eating out on Sunday so they went the day without eating until they arrived back in camp that evening.

All in all, it was disconcerting and he was feeling low. He said that originally his tentmates were using some foul language but when they realized he didn't approve, they cleaned up their act and were doing a lot better.

The whole time I was visiting with Paul, Tim was sitting in the dining area, listening and worrying. After the conversation, Tim asked why Paul didn't just quit and come home rather than have to deal with the problems. I could see that Tim was pretty shaken up and hurting for Paul. It made me realize how close they have become and how much Tim loves his brothers and sisters who are away.

It was kind of interesting the impression that I had yesterday as we sat down to Sunday dinner of turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy. The thought passed through my mind that I wished I knew that Paul was having a nice dinner, too. Somehow I felt that he probably wasn't and I felt sorry about it. Sometimes I can feel what you children are feeling even though you are miles away and it helps me to be more persistent in my prayers. It keeps me humble and aware of our dependency on the Lord.

[Dad] Well, it is time to warn all drivers that Tim has his license and may be encountered on the road at any time. He has been excited about being able to drive and we have been ready to have him. It is such a relief not to have to chase him around for his mowing jobs, or send two of us over to Joneses so that we can leave the Toyota for him to dump into, etc. He has been really conscientious with his jobs and especially with his early morning weeding job for Richard Tominaga. But it has put a strain on us to be up late and then to get him up at 5:00 the next morning.

As I opened my planner I was listening to Tim coughing before he left this morning and read this quote by George Herbert: *"Love and a cough cannot be hid."* How true! But most of all I'm thinking about how hard it is to hide evidences of love. There are so many ways that it comes shining through. How important it is in a relationship to speak of your feelings regardless of other manifestations of your love. The spoken word, the light caress, the loving look, the signs of awareness of feelings or pain all help to strengthen the web of consciousness of caring, of love. Husbands—remember my words and try not to hide your love in any way because of the pressures of work, Church callings, etc.

I hope that each of you are aware of how much your Mother and I think and pray and care about you. The letters or phone calls are a small indication of our interest in your lives and how you are feeling about what you are experiencing. I guess maybe Heavenly Father has that same interest in each of us—how we are feeling and responding to the events of our lives. Whether we are being shaped and molded into heavenly beings mentally, spiritually, and eventually—physically.

July 10, 1996

[Mom] Since being sustained as president of the YW organization, there has been a flurry of activity. We've needed to complete preparations for the Laurel Super Activity as well as assist the camp directors with their preparations for Girls Camp next week. When the Bishop called me to this job he said that the activities for the next few weeks were pretty much ready and covered and we could, as a new presidency, just observe and enjoy while the old presidency completed their projects. Within four hours of being sustained, several of the old presidency had called me and excused themselves

from completing their assignments, so much of it has been dropped in our laps. Thank goodness for capable and willing counselors who have helped me move ahead without sacrificing the summer program. Thank goodness also for Daddy and Tim and all they have done to cover for me.

Daddy's description of Mike's airport experience was accurate. What a disappointment to those missionaries. It was the first time in all our missionary experience that we had ever had such a thing happen and it was strange how disconcerting it was to all of us. Although we were trying to stay calm and enjoy the additional time with Mike, we were worried about making connections, keeping track of luggage, and helping them not get discouraged. When we took our final good-bye pictures with Mike standing in front of the MTC shuttle bus, he commented that it certainly wasn't the usual farewell photo. Hopefully they were able to leave Tuesday and made all the connections.

Sara Kay had a nice birthday yesterday. I had promised her several weeks ago that she could go to the zoo on her birthday so even though I had a full day ahead we picked up a few of her friends and spent the morning at the zoo. The last few days have been so stressful for me that I wasn't sure I could stand to take the time for it, but it proved to calm my troubled heart and removed me for a while from the phone and the worries of the last several days. This bunch of little girls were so sweet and just ran from cage to cage, trying to read the signs and see everything there was to see. They are all the same age within a few weeks and all are being raised with the gospel in their lives. They were so bubbly and fun and sweet that the whole experience was a nice one and I came home happy.

Tim was home from weeding by the time we arrived back for cake and ice cream and he came in and visited with the little girls and called them each by name and took time with them. They immediately responded to his attention and enjoyed his company. Soon after I delivered them home, he came upstairs and told SaraKay that it was time for the two of them to have a special time together. He went outside with her and helped her put on some training wheels on her bike and took time to make her day special. I thought it was very thoughtful of him to go out of his way like that. This morning he left at 5:30 to weed spuds and this afternoon he has two lawns and the cemetery to finish up before leaving tomorrow for his super activity. I'm glad he gets to go. He has really earned a break.

I'm including a letter from Paul in the mailing but it is 10 days old and things are looking up for him. He had a much better Sabbath last week and is feeling more at home with the staff. We were sorry he missed seeing Mike at the airport. That was the hardest time for him to be gone. Daddy and Tim are going to the camp next weekend and will stay with him for a couple days while Dad substitutes as camp director. I'm glad they are going to get to have some time with him.

I will leave for Girl's Camp on Tuesday morning and stay several days while Dad and Tim take care of the home front. It has been so many years since I have gone to Girl's Camp as a leader that this will really be a new experience for me; hopefully a good one.

July 14, 1996

[Dad] I have been called, sustained, and set apart as a Sunday School Teacher for Course 14--Tim's class.) Today, in class it was almost impossible to get those kids to say much, but I did get a comment or two from each person in the class and Tim thought I did all right with the lesson.

Friday, I had a two-hour session with Kim Hansen, my new boss. We were able to talk about my critical achievements, about strengths and weaknesses of the Council, and about any changes I felt should be made. It was a great meeting of the minds (or a meeting of great minds!) and it really felt good to be able to share openly with him some of my observations. He expressed good feelings and impressions about me and the job I am doing. I think we are going to be able to work well together.

Earlier this week he pulled everyone down from the camps for a four-hour staff meeting. One of the things he shared as a part of his philosophy of management was that if you are doing your job, he will get out of the way and let you do it. He also discussed the fact that changes would be made because of differences in style of him and Brad and that changes were not inherently good or bad nor a reflection on the previous Scout Executive as being right or wrong. His major objective is to build a strong professional team, with emphasis on the word team, and to reach more boys with the Scouting program.

After taking SaraKay to Watson's on Friday night, I was all alone. Mom was in Manti for the pageant with the Laurels and Tim was gone on his super activity. It was really strange knocking around here at home all alone.

Yesterday, I went with the Wood Badge staff to Treasure Mountain Scout Camp to walk through what we are going to do and where everything is going to be taking place. Last night we had a pre-course orientation meeting at the Idaho Falls Scout office and were gratified with the response. I am looking forward to another great Wood Badge experience next month.

My thoughts have been with Mike as I have envisioned his arrival in the mission and being assigned to his first area and beginning his labors in earnest. I sure pray he is getting thoroughly immersed in the work and feeling a divine purpose to being where he is. Work hard, love the people, and follow your priesthood leaders—those are the keys to a successful mission. Remember what Ralph Waldo Emerson said, *"Good luck is another name for tenacity of purpose."*

[Mom] Tomorrow morning Daddy and I will be leaving for camp. Daddy will help with the set-up and then return home and I will stay until Wednesday night, come home for part of Thursday and return for Thursday evening festivities.

Daddy and Tim are leaving Friday morning to go to the Salmon Camp to act as directors while the director takes a weekend off. They are excited to get to see Paul and spend the weekend with him. Last weekend I went with the Laurels to Utah to the Manti Pageant and toured Temple Square. It was a fun activity and gave me an opportunity to get better acquainted with the girls.

It was such an inspiring experience. The pageant is full of good music, touching scenes, dramatic episodes, and colorful costumes. The whole production takes place on a steep grassy slope adjacent to the temple and prior to the program beginning, there is beautiful sacred music broadcast over the sound system. Just sitting amidst 30,000 spectators and visiting in the beautiful summer evening with the temple as the backdrop is a wonderful experience. I kept looking at the temple and marveling at those early pioneer's vision and hard work. Next Thursday I will be speaking at the West Stake's girl's camp for their Thursday night program. The topic is "No toil nor labor fear".

As I contemplated the work required in the early days of the church and also thought about the work required of us today, I recalled some of the struggles that you

children and in-laws have experienced as you have set your sights on college degrees and then studied, worked long hours, gone without, lived with cockroaches, moved long distances, served in the church, stayed up late and gotten up early, and paid the price to accomplish your goals.

Our day and age are different from our forefathers but the same determination is needed to accomplish the task. I have to remind myself that hard work is a blessing, because there have been times when I have gone to the Lord and pleaded with him to make life a little easier for you children and then I have remembered what a blessing work has been in my life and I repent of my request and ask instead that you will have strength for your challenges.

My thoughts have been with Mike since leaving him at the airport last Monday. Somehow the disappointment of the delay has haunted me and I have hoped that everything went well for him on Tuesday. I know that the first few days in the field are very stressful and I just pray that he will know of our loving concern and support.

Steph and Linds are making plans for their move to Morgan Hill. They were fortunate to find a lovely home to rent in their previous ward and it is in a very nice school district.

Shauntel and Randy have submitted adoption papers and are going through interviewing with Social Services. Shauntel has made arrangement to help Steph and Linds with their move.

Jonie is home from Minneapolis and expecting a baby in December. She has had a good pregnancy and seems to be avoiding the problems she had with her last two.

Steve and Bonnie are excited for their new home and anxious to see it progress.

David and Andrea spoke in church yesterday and are starting to feel a part of things. David has had opportunity to work with the missionaries and Andrea is teaching Primary.

Becky is counting down the days until August 1st. John is busy with work, school, being assistant ward exec secretary, and his social life.

Paul is feeling more at ease with his job. Yesterday when I called him I visited with the camp director while a messenger went to get Paul. Rudy (camp director) made the comment that Paul is the spiritual leader at camp and that if anyone ever needed a blessing, it would be Paul they would get to do it. That would be tricky since Paul hasn't received the Melchizedek Priesthood yet, but it was a sweet compliment.

July 22,1996

[Mom] Last week was a busy one with me spending most of three days at Girls Camp and Tim and Daddy spending the weekend with Paul in Salmon. Daddy helped on Tuesday to get the camp set up for our ward's Young Women and I came to appreciate all his camping skills and know-how. He took along some of our own equipment including a large tarp and he and Bob Jenks and Clark Wray attached it to some trees and made a large covered area for us under which we had five banquet tables for eating. Tuesday night we had such a downpour that flag ceremony was interrupted and we all made a mad dash for the lodge. We watched as it rained so hard that we couldn't even see to the other side of the meadow.

Upon returning to our camp, we discovered that many of the tents had been left exposed and sleeping bags, pillows, and clothes were soaked as well as any food or equipment we had left out. It was a good lesson for us all and we spent the rest of the evening drying things out over the fire.

The shelter Daddy constructed proved a

real God-send since most of the tables and eating area remained dry and usable. Daddy returned home Tuesday afternoon and I stayed until Wednesday evening and rode home with Pam and Randy Cox who led the long hike.

I was ready to come home and thought it was a blessing. I have a fetish for organization and time management and it is difficult for me to be in situations where there is a lot of time wasted and where things are not carefully scheduled and carried out. I was at camp as a visitor, not as director and so I was careful not to interfere too much.

But it was hard to see so much time wasted. I found myself chaffing under the lack of discipline as far as dish, meal, and latrine duty that should have been a part of the girls' experience. I wanted to see time spent on creating fun skits and meaningful flag raising ceremonies, but the adult leaders pretty much did the planning which left the kids without a lot of motivation

I guess my subtle suggestions were not so subtle because the last night at campfire, I received the "On the Ball" award for trying to get the camp more organized and efficient. Anyway, yesterday the camp director said that she would like to have an evaluation session and jot down some of the ideas that might help next year's director get a better handle on the free time allotted the wards. I was grateful that she could see that things could have been better organized and that maybe another year we would approach it differently.

My second counselor was in camp for one day and she expressed some of the same concerns. Live and Learn. I was grateful to be able to be in camp and get a feel for the girls and the program. We had a good bunch of young women and no big fights or hurt feelings or mean pranks.

Our testimony meeting Thursday night was very spiritual and focused on gospel principles. That was one of our goals and we felt good about it. I rode with Bishop and Brenda back up on Thursday and had some good visits with them about some of the changes I would like to make in youth leadership training and the program in general. Hopefully I can get myself organized to accomplish what I would like to see happen.

This Thursday I am speaking at the other stake's girls' camp and I have been trying to figure out what to say that will be inspirational. Daddy has been asked to play "Come, Come, Ye Saints" on his trumpet at the conclusion of the evening's program.

Daddy and Tim had a wonderful time with Paul. I knew they would. Paul was supervising a repelling group that they were a part of and also was their guide on a rafting trip down the Salmon. Daddy said that Paul did a great job and has developed a lot of confidence over the summer. They all attended church together on Sunday and arrived back home about five.

It had been a pretty quiet weekend for Sara Kay and me. Since SaraKay had been without me most of the week, she was glad to have me home to read to her, watch videos, and watch her ride her bike. I had so many things pressing that I lacked the enthusiasm I should have had.

She was assigned to present "Scripture Hero" in Primary Sunday and so we fixed her up with a costume that looked like Queen Ester complete with homemade crown adorned with blue feathers, beads, and tin foil. When "her highness" walked into Primary she definitely had everyone's attention and she said her speech without a hitch. It was a fun experience for both of us and the children's attentiveness made it worth the effort. She was so excited to do it that she was up at 6:30 Sunday morning anxious to get to church.

Becky called the other day and had been

involved with a fight at school. She and a behaviorist had to physically keep two boys apart that were having a fist fight. She said she got through the episode just fine but later started to react to it and shake all over.

It has been a very emotionally and physically draining job to work with these "at risk" kids and every day is a new challenge. She said that the other morning she got to work early and in the process of unloading her supplies, she locked her keys in. She was across the street from the police station so she got a policeman and he tried for about 20 minutes to get her keys but to no avail.

Finally, when some of her male students began arriving, she beckoned to them, showed them the problem, and in a few minutes they had her car unlocked! Most of them have been involved with car theft at some time in their life and they knew just what to do. Quite an experience for a girl who has led a relatively sheltered life!

John called last night and we had a good visit. He is very busy with school and work and keeps a pretty busy social life as well. He said that he had been involved with interviews and meetings yesterday for nine hours straight. He was tired but invigorated with his sweet Sabbath and mentioned how much he appreciated the opportunity to work with the bishopric of his ward.

Hopefully Steph and Linds will be able to see everyone for the few days they are in Utah en route to California. Steph and the kids will fly to Salt Lake on the second of August and come to Idaho for the next week, meeting Linds back in Utah on the 11th and proceed from there to California.

It's a busy time for them as they tie up loose ends and say their good-byes. The hardest good-bye will be to the Andersons of Iowa. Shauntel is going to spend a week in Bloomington helping them get moved; welcomed help I am sure. Wish that Iowa wasn't quite so far away.

July 29, 1996

[Mom] I received a phone call from Jonie last Wednesday afternoon. She started to hemorrhage and was taken to the hospital. Her cervix had something wrong with it and she was threatening to deliver her baby at six months. She was told that with the condition of her uterus that they would have to take the baby and they gave her very little hope that it would survive. She delivered about 2 a.m. on Thursday morning, a little boy. It was a sad time for them as they made the necessary arrangements for his burial. She said that the doctor allowed them to keep him in their room for a while following his birth and have a chance to say their good-byes. The grave side service was held Saturday. She said that Sydney and Cory are doing all right with it all but she and Jeff have had a struggle. Our prayers are with you, Jonie.

We're hoping to get another letter from Mike soon and find out that things are looking up for him. I know from talking to the returned missionaries in the family that these first months can be pretty discouraging.

I called Paul last night and he sounded good. Two weeks left and he will be home. Two more days Chet will be home. Four more days and Steph and kids will be flying into Salt Lake and saying good-bye to the Bloomington chapter of their lives.

Lindsay will be driving the moving van and towing the car and pick up his brother in Salt Lake, continuing on to Morgan Hill and the job of unloading everything. It doesn't seem like it was very long ago that they were doing this in reverse. Thank goodness they are on this end of the three years. What an accomplishment! They have really loved the area and people and will always have fond memories of their time in Indiana.

Last Friday I made a trip to American Falls to attend a reunion of my old high school girl friends. It was a slumber party but I just spent the afternoon and evening since I had been gone almost every night with YW things. Renee Hawkley was the one who had the idea for us to get together. We had not done this in 32 years but last year Louise and family moved back to Utah from the East coast so it made a reunion feasible.

We arrived about 1:30 and talked all afternoon, ate supper about eight and kept talking until the wee hours. What fun! We brought pictures of our families and we each took a turn telling about our kids, where they are and what they are doing. I had the oldest and youngest of anyone there. Five of the six of us had married children, four had missionaries presently serving, four had a senior graduate last May, and we had a total of 45 children. I had 10, Carol 9, Renee 8, Annette 7, Jane 6, and Louise 5.

We laughed about our high school adventures, old boy friends, and other such nonsense and it just went on and on getting funnier and funnier. We also spent some time talking politics, BYU, and other interesting topics. Of course, we took lots of pictures and set a future date for edition two of this event.

I was amazed that our lives were so similar. We had all married in the temple and had the blessings of the gospel in our lives. Carol Erickson was the only one divorced and has had some very tough times over the last several years. She had a 16-year-old son killed in a car accident four years ago and following this, her husband left and hasn't been back except for an occasional visit.

She received word from a lawyer that he had gotten a divorce from her in Mexico. Just last September a second son was killed in another accident. She returned to college and graduated from BYU and is teaching English in Tooele. She is trying to get her life under control again after so much heartache and it was sweet to be with her and feel her goodness and courage.

I was the only one of my group who doesn't have a college degree and two of them even have their Masters degrees from the Y. Jane is the only one who has lost a parent. The rest of us still have both parents living. We have all done our share of church and community service.

Thursday Daddy and I drove up to Girls Camp for the West Stake's Thursday night program. I spoke and Daddy played his trumpet. We were invited early for a Dutch oven dinner and we thoroughly enjoyed the chance to visit with so many of our old friends and associates. The program started about eight and was over at dusk. I was asked to speak to the topic, "But with Joy Wend Your Way."

It had been hard for me to focus on the preparation for it with all the other demands on my time lately but it went okay. I am going to have to be careful not to over schedule myself now that I have this YW job. It is involved and takes a lot of time.

[Dad] Let me start by telling you what an outstanding job your mother did with her talk. It was a thrill to be with her! It was especially sweet for us to be able to visit with some of our friends in that stake. They will always be dear to us. It was nice to be a small part of that night's program.

After the talk by Sue and a testimony from President Dance and the flag ceremony, the wards made a semi-circle around the meadow. President Stanley Williams had an Olympic style torch that he carried from one group to another and they held the torch as they sang their song about one of the YW's values. After the last ward had sung, he carried the torch to the center of

the meadow and that was the signal for me to play "Come, Come Ye Saints" from up on the hillside. It was a meaningful experience and worth the effort to be there.

I am still going through withdrawal as a result of my release from the Young Men. I didn't think it was going to be this hard. As I watched the young men administering and passing the sacrament I thought it takes a lot more than a release for me to quit loving and caring for those young men.

I am grateful for my Sunday School class and the opportunity to teach and associate with a few of them and the special young ladies that are in my class.

The Tiger Ear Booth and Wood Badge have been the focus of much of my efforts at work lately. I think everything is as much in order as I can get them at this point for both of those duties. I have thought how special it would be if any of you are in Scouting positions for very long and choose to take advantage of the additional training of Wood Badge, if it could be arranged for you to come here and especially in a course that I am affiliated with on staff. I really don't think there is any council in the country that does a course any better than we do.

Believe it or not we now have one garage door that is operated by an electric garage door opener! It took me most of Saturday to complete the installation. But everything works great! It should make it a little easier to keep one door down and to keep the garage cleaner.

"Where one succeeds because of his smartness, ten succeed because of their faithfulness." I admit that I am proud of how smart you kids are but I am even more grateful and proud of how faithful you are!

July 1996

[Dad] Last Friday and Saturday nights as we went to bed and I watched Tim and Paul read their scriptures by flashlight because the generator was turned off, I realized anew what wonderful, dedicated kids I had been blessed with. I certainly didn't have that commitment to reading the scriptures daily at their age. (I still don't.)

It was a treat to be able to spend the time we did at SRHAB with Paul. He has certainly grown physically, spiritually, and emotionally this summer. It's been a growing experience to be away from his friends and to have to stand up for his beliefs. He is an excellent river guide, repelling instructor, and staff member. He takes his assignments seriously and carries them out and yet is willing to pitch in and help others with things that he sees need to be done. We really had some good talks and I know the touch of family helped to recharge his batteries and keep him going for the balance of the summer.

It was a pleasure for me to be able to help Sue and the girls set up their camp. It was fun to watch her with the girls and realize what a strength she is going to be to the Young Women's program in our ward. Her insights and organizational abilities will make a world of difference.

Another thing I did last week was to drive to Twin Falls and pick up a ton of sugar for the Tiger Ear booth. It is hard to believe that the time is rapidly approaching for that again. It is interesting to try to bring together all the resources and people to carry that project off.

One of the most interesting things is the difference in response from district to district in the requests for volunteers to work the various shifts. Many of them go right to work to fill their assignments and others whine and complain and say they can't get it done. Attitude makes so much difference in getting things done!

It was so good to hear from Mike today. We have been watching the mail every day and wondering how he was doing. It was also

interesting that the National Geographic that came today also is highlighting Mexico. *"Bright with promise, tangled in the past"* is the opening description of Emerging Mexico. *"Just a few years ago Mexico was moving smartly toward true democracy, free enterprise, and partnerships with world powers. Now political scandals, a rebel uprising, and the worst recession in more than half a century have sent it reeling. Yet even in the choking sprawl of Mexico City the timeless support of family, faith, music, and laughter creates a resilience that fears about the future cannot erode."* What a beautiful commentary about the values that help a nation to rise.

August 4, 1996

[Dad] This has been a busy week at work and I have felt good about all that I have been able to accomplish. I'm dreading this next week, being gone for a week and a half. One of the hardest things to accept is that I will miss virtually all of Stephani's visit. We have been looking forward to having some grandkids here for a few days. It seems like annual visits are so far between. But, we are starting to plan for a family reunion next year; Mom will give you more of the details as we work them through.

I went to Treasure Mountain Scout Camp yesterday to get oriented on generator, water, equipment, bears, etc. for Wood Badge, since I will be the resident ranger while we are there. Being there in that lodge and seeing the waterfront, the Goldilocks cabins, and the rest of the facilities there inspired your mother to start thinking reunion. It was fun to have Tim, Sara Kay, and Sue in the camp. Sue and I also were able to have a great visit while we traveled because Tim and Sara Kay slept all the way up and most of the way back.

I really enjoyed my Sunday School lesson today. I am fortunate to have such a neat class of kids. We were talking about Captain Moroni and Amalakiah and the contrast between them as leaders and their motivation and desires. The kids really seemed interested in talking about war, conscientious objectors, and our stand as a Church regarding going to war. I was surprised at how much they know and understand.

It has been inspirational to me to be able to witness as much of the Olympics as I have been able to. It was fun to watch the women's "Dream Team" win their final game. Sixty wins and no losses to reach the goal of an Olympic Gold Medal. They have certainly raised the level of awareness and acceptance of women's basketball. I couldn't help thinking about some of the girls' basketball games I have seen and realize how far the sport has come. The intensity of their game made it much more exciting to watch than the men's game.

I have appreciated the vignettes shown during the Olympics telecasts that have helped to personalize these games. Many athletes have made extreme sacrifices and herculean efforts to make it to Atlanta and it is truly an inspiration. The indomitable spirit of winners at that level is a real motivation to keep on keeping on in our own daily quests for excellence and achievements, big or small. If there was an Olympic medal category for family, friendship, obedience, hard work, sharing, caring, neighborliness, service, developing and sharing talents, and faithfulness, you would all be Gold medal winners!

This is Paul's last week at SRHAB and we are looking forward to having some time with him before he leaves for Ricks. We hope that Mike is getting our letters and feels the support of our constant prayers for him. Chet is home and Becky is trying to have quality time with him to settle her feelings about marriage. John has finals

this week, is coming home this weekend, and we are going on a little campout next week.

[Mom] We've had a great week watching the Olympics. It was heart-warming to see the personal sketches of the athletes. Thank goodness there was a minimum of problems with terrorism.

I'm sure that Stephani and Lindsay and Shauntel didn't see much of the action but had plenty of their own action to occupy them for the week. Shauntel arrived in Bloomington on Saturday the 27th to help with the many details of the move. Between the three adults and three children they packed up everything they owned, cleaned, and prepared to leave on Friday morning.

Shauntel called after arriving back home and asked if I had heard from them yet. I received a phone call Friday night from Stephani reporting that despite several unexpected complications, they had met their flight and she and the kids arrived safely in Salt Lake after a long day of flights and layovers. Josh seemed to be the most upset with all the changes but Katie and Sam got along great.

Lindsay was leaving Saturday morning and driving through to Salt Lake with the moving van towing their car. Stephani related to me that as they were leaving Bloomington on their way to the airport, she discovered that she had not allowed for a time change before arriving at the air terminal and they realized that they were going to be cutting it awfully close. Lindsay drove as fast as possible to get them to the airport and they notified the airport personnel that they were in the terminal and to please hold the flight a few minutes while they made their way to the loading area. She said that she and Lindsay and three little ones ran through the airport with luggage in hand and made the flight.

Little Josh was so shook up from the commotion that he had a tough time settling down but eventually calm was restored. I just received word that Lindsay made it to Salt Lake and will be leaving tomorrow morning for San Jose. Stephani will be coming here for the balance of the week and then meet Linds in Salt Lake this Sunday. Moves are always difficult. It is a good thing we forget how miserable they are or none of us would ever be willing to make a change.

Stephani expressed how much she appreciated Shauntel's help and Shauntel commented that it was nice to lend a hand. She also said that it was heart-warming to see the many people who came to help them with loading the van and to say good-bye.

Chet arrived home and he and Becky seem to be as much in love as they were three months ago. Becky's schedule has been so hectic with the transition from private to public school but things are definitely improving in her work situation and she is looking forward to a more satisfying teaching arrangement this fall.

John is under it with all his classes nearing completion. He is looking forward to a short vacation in a couple of weeks. We are excited for all the family we are going to have visiting these next few weeks.

Daddy's commitments at Wood Badge have come at a bad time but we will work around it. I always dread having full responsibility for yard, garden, and watering. Hopefully we won't have any major catastrophes to deal with while he is gone. You may have noticed that the format on this document looks strange. I can't get the margins to straighten up! This computer must know that Daddy is leaving and is throwing a fit of its own.

Paul is in his final week of scout camp and anxious to get home and ready for college. We will all breathe a sigh of relief that he is finished and safe.

August 12,1996

[Mom] Last Monday Daddy and I drove to Salt Lake to bring Stephani and kids home for a visit while Lindsay drove the moving van to Morgan Hill, unloaded, worked a few days, and started moving in. They seem to have a very nice situation and hopefully the transition will not be too difficult.

When we arrived at Lindsay's grandparent's home and saw the moving truck parked in front, it seemed like only a short time ago that we were saying good-bye to them before their departure to Bloomington.

Our trip home from Salt Lake reminded me of how things used to be before we were out of the "pre-schooler" stage. The ride got long and the kids were wound up and we couldn't get them to go to sleep. Finally, Stephani started telling them stories and then they sang songs for us. I was sitting by Josh and he was singing right along with the rest, hardly missing a word. Before long things settled down and soon Josh was asleep. It was nice for Daddy to get to visit with Stephani since he left Wednesday morning for Wood Badge and that was the extent of his time with them.

The rest of the week was spent with the kids playing on the trampoline, eating popsicles, swimming in the kiddie pool, eating rice krispie treats, watching videos, eating cookies, playing Barbies, and drinking pop. It kept us all on the run to keep everyone happy. Steph and I did steal some time to sit in the swing and visit.

A few days before they arrived I went grocery shopping and bought a few extra things. Tim came home from work one afternoon and started rummaging through the cupboards and fridge looking for a snack. He discovered some of the treats and his spirits started to improve. He asked, "Wow, what's the occasion, Mom?" "Steph and kids are coming," I replied. With a big grin he turned to me and said, "I love you, Grandma!"

Yesterday Steve and Bonnie and kids joined us for our meetings and dinner afterwards. They were on their way home from the annual Johnson reunion at Alpine. Stephani hadn't seen Nathan yet and it was fun to watch Rachel with the cousins. When Sara Kay came home from church she told me that she wanted to be a cousin instead of an aunt. She said people laughed when she said she was Katie and Sam's aunt.

Sunday morning I secured the second row in the chapel, knowing we would need the room for everyone. By the time we got seated it was an awesome sight. When Steve and Bonnie arrived, Josh left Stephani's lap and headed over to see Nathan. Soon he was sitting on Steve's lap. Throughout the meeting the whole row was shuffling here and there, trying to keep quiet.

Just before the sacrament prayers Josh was standing on the bench by Paul. All of a sudden, he looked at Paul and said, "Knock, Knock?" We had been doing knock, knock jokes all week so we shouldn't have been surprised but he said it so loud that it was heard throughout the chapel. Steph made a mad reach for him, but not before he again repeated, "Knock, knock!" The people behind us were cracking up. Luckily, we got his attention diverted. When Bonnie sat down on the bench, Nathan spit up down the back of her dress. By the time we made it through the meeting we were relieved and headed for the nursery. I had forgotten how intense church can be with tiny ones.

When I got into YW's and was ready to start my lesson I realized that I had an extra diaper and cheerios in my briefcase and I offered them to my Laurels with the explanation that I had had a hectic morning and hoped the lesson would be a bit more

put together than I felt. That made them chuckle.

Wednesday night we were downstairs watching TV and we heard someone come in the backdoor. We assumed it was Tim and we continued watching TV.

All at once Paul walked in. He had been injured that morning on a river run and had returned home with a group from Blackfoot. He wrenched his back and the EMT's told him they thought he had injured a disc so the next morning we took him in for x-rays. Dr. Haddock found no structural damage and gave us some medication and told him to get some rest. We were grateful that nothing was seriously wrong.

Last night Paul and I left for Salt Lake to take Stephani and family back to Peterson's where they will meet Linds and have some time there with his parents. We left a few minutes ahead of Steve and Bonnie and had a rather quiet but enjoyable trip. Becky and John met us at Peterson's and so after we bid Stephani good-bye, we drove to a nearby stake center and parked and visited for a while.

We left there about ten and headed home only to get caught in the most horrendous traffic jam. Earlier that evening there was an accident by the refineries and there was one lane traffic. It took us an hour and a half to get from the refineries to Bountiful. Thank goodness I had Paul along. We visited about his Salmon experience and it helped pass the time. We arrived home in the wee hours and felt fortunate that neither of us had to be up early this morning.

Daddy called numerous times from Wood Badge and was busy getting things ready for the course participants. When he called this morning I asked him how he was doing and he admitted that he had fallen and sprained his ankle and was on a cane. He has a difficult time whenever he is walking on uneven, unfamiliar territory and I worried about it happening. He was upset with himself for doing it but said that he was getting along okay. I reported our week's activities including our midnight ride from Salt Lake. I realize how much I depend on Daddy and I am so grateful for him and all he does for our family.

I need to quit. Tomorrow is my presidency meeting and my August school board meeting. I received a thick packet of information that I need to familiarize myself with before our meeting. This job is scary but interesting and I am learning a lot. I have two presentations to make tomorrow night regarding eligibility standards for athletes and also a report on the library board meeting. I am enjoying my opportunity to work with the young women.

The window in the computer room is open and I can hear the neighbor children out playing and dogs barking. It's finally cooling off after a very hot and humid day and it feels good as the night air comes in the open window. Tim is at the pallet palace working tonight and Paul had a date to a Salmon River farewell party. I miss Daddy… and the rest of you, too.

August 18, 1996

[Dad] Let me start by sharing a little philosophy that has been important to me throughout my life. "*In promulgating your esoteric cogitations or articulating your superficial sentimentalities or amicable philosophical or psychological observations, beware of platitudinous ponderosity. Let your conversational communications possess a clarified conciseness, a compacted comprehensibleness, and a concatenated cogency. Eschew all conglomerations of flatulent garrulity, jejune babblement and asinine affectations. In other words, speak up, say what you mean, mean what you say and don't use big words!* There, now you have it in print if you want to memorize it.

The last week and a half at Wood Badge has been a time of a lot of highs and mediums (no lows!) and a heck of a lot of work. I was lucky to find time for a shower about every other day. Being one of the quartermasters for a course like this and responsible for every physical thing that anybody on staff or participant wants is really demanding.

It is hard to visualize the quantities of food that 60 people can go through in a week. It was rewarding to have anticipated just about everything that would be needed and to be able to supply virtually everything we were asked for. It was a great course with 42 participants who were all really touched with the spirit of Scouting and will make a tremendous difference when they go back to their units and carry out their goals or "tickets".

We had a few incidents with bears in camp during the week, but we were getting casual about bear precautions by the end of the week and were rewarded with a real rampage on Friday night. Quite a few of the participants saw bears, and during the final campfire one crawled through the passenger window of a van, drank a can of pop, and took the lid off a can of chocolate coated carmel corn and ate it. The fellow had left his keys in the van and we kidded him about being lucky the bear didn't drive off with his car.

We had wonderful participants who gelled together in their patrols and as a staff we got along remarkably well without any arguments or personality conflicts. We had participants all the way from a recently returned missionary to an 82-year-old gentleman.

One of the last trips I made to town for supplies, a lovely white-haired lady came up to me in the parking lot of Hillman's grocery store and asked how Milton Beck was getting along. She was his wife. I was glad to report that he was getting along wonderfully and that we benefited from having him come on course.

We had a couple of Scouters from Utah that came up and they were impressed with the quality and spirit of the staff, the training, and the other participants. We had a Stake President and a counselor in a Stake Presidency. The Doug Andrus of trucking fame was also one of our participants. He is extremely talented and wrote a new song each day for his patrol to sing when they reported at Gilwell.

One of the highlights for me was being able to bugle—Reveille in the morning at 6:30, to the colors at each flag raising, recall for each flag lowering, and Taps each night. It is a thrill to hear the sound reverberate between those mountains. Most mornings I would also play "Come, Come Ye Saints" after Reveille, just for fun.

John arrived here last night and we have really enjoyed him. Today for Church we met in the Riverside Chapel from 3:00 to 6:00. They are replacing carpet, painting, and a few other changes in our building. It really seemed strange to be going to church so late in the day.

[Mom] The high point of the week was having Daddy arrive home safe and sound from Wood Badge and seeing the satisfaction he felt with the course. We spent time Saturday night visiting with him about some of the experiences that touched him and some of the impressions he had as he worked through the challenges of being quartermaster.

While he was in the mountains working long hours, we were trying to keep the lawn watered in record high temperatures and keep the garden from being overrun with weeds. It was such a relief to have both Paul and Tim here to help and we were so proud of ourselves for having the yard and garden well-groomed by the time Daddy arrived home.

We had our annual ward party Friday night (an overnight campout) and we decided that we would go as a family even if Daddy wasn't here to help. We loaded sleeping bags, tent, coolers, suitcases, mosquito repellent, treats and whatever else we deemed necessary and headed to Pingree to the appointed location. Dinner was to be at 7:00 with a program afterwards so we thought that we should get there a little early to set up camp.

When we arrived at the location it was a large spacious pasture (manure included) down by a beautiful stretch of the Snake River. We arrived about 6:30 and uncertain that we were in the right spot, we waited a while, wandered around, and wondered if we were mistaken about the time and place. Finally, we decided to go ahead and pitch our tent and hope that someone didn't come and ask us what we were doing trespassing in their pasture.

That was when we discovered that we had forgotten a hammer to drive in the tent pegs. Being naturally resourceful, we gathered some big stones and proceeded to pound the pegs into some of the hardest soil in the world. After considerable debate, wrong choices and changing of poles, we finally got the tent in an upright position. About that time, I felt grateful that the rest of the ward hadn't arrived yet and seen two Eagle scouts and one frustrated mother trying to get a tent pitched and suitable for occupancy.

Toward the end of the pitching ordeal, ward members started arriving and the evening proved to be fun. The only drawback was that the activity committee who planned the event was comprised of priesthood brethren who failed to arrange for a bathroom. I guess having a sit-down bathroom is not nearly as important to men as women. It became quite an inconvenience for those of us who planned to spend the night and who couldn't begin to "hold it" that long.

When I realized that I was going to need a bush, I began looking around for something remote and bushy, but there was little that met that description. I decided to "wait until dark" and figure something out. Soon SaraKay and I were headed with a flashlight in hand to a private spot, but the minute she saw that I was going beyond the light of the campfire and group, she panicked and refused to go with me.

Well, it was quite an interesting situation and someday in private I may tell you how I solved the dilemma but for now let me say we stayed, survived, and had a great time.

The next morning we got up and broke camp before breakfast was served. Paul has learned some good skills in his outdoor experiences and he made short work of getting us packed up and ready to go with the able assistance of camper Tim. We really did have a wonderful time and felt proud of ourselves for being able to do so well without Daddy.

Last week was another school board meeting, a Laurel class presidency meeting, and a YW presidency meeting. I am thoroughly enjoying my involvement with the Young Women and we have had some wonderful things happen as we have worked with the girls. I am still overwhelmed with my school board responsibilities.

This week I have a training in Pocatello and also an early morning breakfast goal-setting session on Friday. Next Thursday I am a presenter in a stake Relief Society share fair on the topic, "Preparing Children for College". I am meeting with the high school guidance counselors and getting their ideas and input and also working with an elementary principal to gather ideas on helping young children succeed in school. I am also using some personal tips that have worked for us and hoping that it will all come together.

I've written a lot about me so now let me fill

you in on family news. Steph called this morning and they have arrived safely in Morgan Hill and love their home and situation. She was taking Katie and Sam to register them for school today. John spent some time with them on Saturday in Salt Lake just before they left for California. In fact, while he was there, Katie cut a deep gash in her foot and John drove with Lindsay back to Lindon where Lind's father put in 10 stitches to close up the wound.

John relished the chance to visit and get some advice from Linds about career possibilities and he said that Katie was a good little patient. We all thoroughly enjoyed the chance to visit with Steph, Linds and the kids and wish them well in their new home and job!

Becky called tonight and she and Chet were deciding on wedding announcements. She was grateful to report that they have found an apartment and she will be moving into it in a couple of weeks. Her work situation is improving and she is getting some relief from the stress she was under. She is going to have an all-expense paid trip to Washington D.C. in conjunction with her work.

John has been a joy to have around. He is free from school worries and we have laughed and talked and joked. We've spent considerable time discussing the question, "How's your love life" and he's assured us that he is doing his part to find the "one". He is enjoying his major and also busy with his hospital job.

Steve and Bonnie are eagerly watching their house take shape and make frequent trips to Tooele to see what progress is being made.

David and Andrea have written a letter this week and they will tell you themselves how life is going.

Shauntel starts school this week and dreads getting back to the routine of full-time psychologist and homemaker, but she said that she usually enjoys it once she gets started. Randy is doing a section on Emergency Room and we have enjoyed the experiences he has shared with us as he has worked in that high-pressure environment.

Jonie called the other day and she was freezing corn. Occasionally she will call and tell me she is making bread, freezing vegetables, or doing something else she learned while here in Idaho and it makes me happy. Her girls are ready to start school.

Mike's letters have been few and far between; we keep praying that he is receiving our mail and feeling our love and support. Hopefully his language skills are enabling him to feel more a part of the companionship. He has so much love and ability and we ache to feel the anxiety he is experiencing but know that the Lord will sustain him if he lives the rules and continues in faith.

Last night we were sitting around visiting (John, Paul, Tim, and Daddy and me) until after 11. As usually happens, the conversation got funnier and funnier as we went along. We stood up to go to bed and the kids followed us to the hallway and we stood there and visited and laughed some more. It was so good to be together and reminisce about old times. (Of course, time alters the events enough that they get better or worse with each telling.)

When we finally did go to bed, Daddy commented that those kinds of late night talks are priceless. I agreed. I went to bed and lie there wishing that we could have taped the conversation, sent it to Mike, and included him in on the fun. We miss his wit and warmth. We miss all of you for that matter but his spot as one of the "four little boys" was pretty vacant last night!

Paul is leaving August 31st for Ricks. He is gathering money, shopping for supplies,

and Wednesday he and his roommates are going to Ricks to buy books and get familiar with the campus. He is ready and I'm not! But, it's going to happen so I'm trying to adjust to another empty bedroom.

Tim is starting cross country, working at the pallet palace, enjoying his teacher's quorum, and getting funnier by the day. He keeps us all laughing with his appraisal of life and circumstances.

While Daddy was gone last week SaraKay slept with me and for the last two nights she has come in during the night and climbed in. The bed was so crowded that Daddy left and slept in the guest room. Last night she tried it again and I gave her an absolute "No!" She complained that she was having bad dreams and afraid to be alone in her bed. I held my ground and she went back to her own bed.

This morning I couldn't find her and became concerned as I checked couches, floors, TV room, etc. Finally, I found her sound asleep in Paul's bed. When I inquired she said she wasn't afraid of the bad dreams with Paul in bed with her. I informed her that soon Paul would be gone and she would have to face sleeping alone. She is not happy with the prospect of Paul being gone and this morning I heard her confide in him that he was her favorite brother. She has told that to several others recently, too. It's hard to be the last of 11 and see the nest getting so empty.

Grandpa Richards is well enough that he and Grandma are planning a trip to Ohio to visit Deniece and family. We are grateful for his partial recovery and increased quality of life. Grandpa and Grandma Larsen spent most of last week at Island Park and are enjoying their time there. We appreciate all the support we feel from both sets of grandparents!

August 26, 1996

[Dad] Last week was a treat with John and Paul here and Becky and Chet here for the weekend. Monday, John, Paul, Tim and I went to Treasure Mountain Scout Camp for an outing and closing down and cleanup of the camp. We got out a couple of canoes and paddled around the lake. We had a race which Paul and I won by ½ a canoe length. We watched a young female moose feeding along the edge of the lake and then went swimming.

The ten days I was there for Wood Badge I wanted to go swimming in the lake but didn't ever have the chance. It was cold water, but not too bad, and we enjoyed trying to sink an unstable part of the dock. We ended up making a quick trip to Jackson with some equipment that belonged in the Scout office there.

When we got back to camp it was late enough that we decided to cook our tin foil dinners in the oven instead of waiting for coals at a fire. But both the dinners and our peach cobbler took longer than expected. They were delicious, however, and worth waiting for.

By then it was dark, and we went up to Chief's rock and had our own campfire program around a lantern. We sang, talked, I played trumpet a little, and then bore testimony to each other. It was a wonderful time which will always be a dear memory for me.

The highlight of the next day was pulling the three bear-proof garbage trailers to the dump at 18 miles per hour—a 35-minute trip each way. It is amazing how much more scenery and detail you can see around you at that speed!

Let me close with the following thought by Dr. Harold Phillips: *"There are two types of strength. There is the strength of the wind that sways the mighty oak and there is the strength of the oak that withstands the power of the wind. There is the strength of the locomotive that pulls the heavy train across the bridge and there is the strength*

of the bridge that holds up the weight of the train. One is active strength, the other is passive strength, one is the power to keep going, the other is the power to keep still. One is the strength by which we overcome, the other is the strength by which we endure." I appreciate the great strength I see in your lives. Keep on keeping on!

[Mom] We've had so many special occasions lately that I've struggled to find time to prepare for the class I'm teaching this Thursday. I know it will come with some prayer and effort but my heart isn't in it.

Daddy mentioned the campout last weekend. They really did have a wonderful time. One of the perks of Dad's scouting job is the opportunity for frequent trips to the camps and the accessibility of equipment.

It was fun to get acquainted with Chet. He is a fine young man! He really went out of his way to be gracious and sweet to us. He and Becky and I spent Saturday shopping and then Saturday evening Daddy, Tim, Sara Kay and I went with them to Airport park and Dad took some candid shots hoping that they might get a good picture for their announcements. They are having some formal ones taken at a place in Provo, but they hoped they could get a good outdoor one.

The experience was fun for us all as we watched them climb trees, perch on a branch over a stream, and lounge on the grass. It was fun to have some relaxed time with them and share in this romance.

Since our Sunday meetings don't start until 3 in the afternoon, Becky and Chet attended the West Stake conference and left for Provo about 2:30. By the way, the new stake presidency in the other stake is Gayle Lim, president, James Turpin, first counselor and Ted Jensen, second counselor.

John left Saturday morning for Provo. It was nice to have him here for the week and we took advantage of the time to get his dental work done, shop for school clothes, and check his car.

Paul leaves for Ricks this Saturday. He is at the cemetery this morning doing some mowing. Last week he received a call from the NASA Space Consortium informing him that he had won a $1000 scholarship and that they were sending out his acceptance letter. Apparently seven awards were given, Paul was 8th and one of the original seven had just decided to attend a college out of Idaho and was disqualified for the award. That was great news!

Yesterday as he sat at the sacrament table I nudged Daddy and reminded him that this would be the last time we'd see him in that spot. It's special to watch our sons pass through the teens and take on manhood and watching them advance in the priesthood is such an important part of that process.

Last night he and his roommates got together and planned what to take to set up housekeeping. When he got home about 10:30, he was all smiles and full of excitement. I am grateful to the Lord for helping him these past years to prepare financially for this.

SaraKay and Tim started school last Thursday and both seem pleased. Tim starts early morning basketball tomorrow and is doing cross country after school. We aren't sure it is compatible so he is going to see how he gets along. He also wants to keep his job with Randy and we have been concerned about that but are willing to let him see how he manages.

Daddy is in the thick of Tiger Ear preparations and I am hustling to keep up with my responsibilities.

September 9, 1996

[Dad] The eight days of Tiger Ear and the Fair are over. We made about 28,000 Tiger Ears in those eight days. We could have made more but we didn't have buyers for any more. As I participated in the process and watched the 562 volunteers that manned the booth come and go, I was touched by the generosity and greatness of the volunteers who make so many good things happen in this world. I would like to share with you the following tribute to volunteers that ran in our local paper a few years ago.

A TRIBUTE TO VOLUNTEERS

Over 50% of the adult population are volunteers. Have you ever stopped to think what would happen in your community if all the volunteers quit?

Our churches, schools, youth organizations, recreation, health institutions, and many community activities all rely on volunteers to expand services and carry out projects.

Volunteerism definitely contributes much to our American way of life. Volunteers all have one thing in common, they gain personal satisfaction from making our world a better place to live. Volunteers also bring their personal uniqueness to the jobs they do. As a salute to you who volunteer, I give you the following essay: You're Great!

You are a unique, new kind of person that the world has never seen before and will never see the likes of again. You were born to do good. You were born to succeed. You were born to bless others' lives. You were born to be great because you've got what it takes to be great.

You're enthusiastic. You're optimistic. You're organized. You're a hard worker. You're happy. You're master of yourself You're a leader. You're a big thinker. And blessed as you are with all of these talents, there isn't a thing in the world you can't do!

I know each of you volunteer and give of your time and talents in many ways. That willingness to give is a characteristic of greatness, a Christ-like attitude, a divine attribute of generosity. I, for one, would like to thank you and remind you that no act of generosity--whether time, money, or talent--goes unnoticed. Whatever you give into the lives of others returns to you ten-fold.

I want to tell Mike how much I have been enjoying his letters. Mike, you really have a gift in writing and being able to express yourself. It's wonderful to be able to share in your mission.

Last night I was able to attend a Wood Badge beading ceremony and to give Frank Rosa, my last Beaver, his beads. It was a thrill to be surrounded with so many good people that have been touched by Scouting and more particularly by the training experience of Wood Badge. I have been asked to be a back-up course director for next year, which will probably mean being a Course Director the following year. I appreciate opportunities like this to be able to utilize my training and leadership experience to benefit the lives of others.

[Mom] I appreciate Daddy's comments. It is a major accomplishment to see that the fair booth is manned and equipment is running so that the flow of money is continuous. Just one hour of down time during the fair, especially during the evening hours, can mean thousands of dollars lost. I feel like Daddy has finished his harvest when we finish up with Wood Badge and the fair.

I appreciated his thoughtfulness last week. Although I was called in for several emergency shifts when volunteers didn't show, I really wasn't in there very much and was left free to take care of my business here at home.

I am trying to do all I can myself for Becky's wedding and I have been making tablecloths, meeting with flower people and lining up things for the decorations. I spent Wednesday in Idaho Falls with my neighbor, Melanie Hanni. She is full of good ideas and knows all the craft stores and took me around to see the various ideas for decorating. She also offered to help me with the refreshments since she has decorated cakes.

I forget how many details there are to weddings but the nice thing about preparing (besides the fact that we are delighted with Chet) is that I have uninterrupted time here at home to work. SaraKay loves school and comes home excited and happy.

Tim is involved in cross country. I don't know how he can run those distances and have energy to do anything else, but he is doing fine in school, basketball, and he is putting in several hours a week at Randy's. Soon he will be in harvest.

Paul is in his first full week at Ricks. He hasn't called home yet although no news from Paul isn't necessarily good news. He is very independent and many times last year he would try to handle things himself and get so overwhelmed that he could hardly function.

When I would realize what was happening, I would talk things through with him and find little ways that I could lighten his load. Hopefully he will let us know if things aren't going well. He told us that after spending time with his advisor he rearranged his schedule and took some engineering classes instead of the generals he signed up for.

Daddy expressed my sentiments about Mike. I get worried when letters don't come and then when we get one, I worry about what he tells us. We like to know what is going on so that we can share his mission with him and be informed worriers! Our prayers ascend for him as he tackles the challenges of culture, language, food, rejection, and companionship problems. Thank you to you siblings for caring and writing.

John is back in school and running a daily marathon of school, work, church assignments and dating. Just to give you some idea of his church assignments. Last week as executive secretary, he lined up 80 interviews with the new students and the bishopric. It has been satisfying but an enormous task and requires that he also spend a lot of time supervising the flow of interviewees. John continues his search for Miss Right (most lovely, spiritual, beautiful, wittiest, and smartest girl on campus) and has not found her yet.

Becky is back East this week touring the nation's capital and attending a convention. She called one night to fill us in on seeing the capital, the Lincoln and Viet Nam memorials, and other sites. She tried to influence her traveling companions to take her to the temple but wasn't sure it was going to happen. The trip has been a wonderful dream come true. Since she teaches history she can use these first-hand experiences in her teaching. I imagine visiting these significant places would touch something pretty deep.

I laughed at Paul's comment the other evening when David and Andrea called to tell us they had just had their offer on a home accepted. Paul was sitting listening to me visit with them about their purchase and when the conversation was over, Paul asked, "Mom, does that seem strange to have Dave and Andrea call and tell you they've bought a home?" "No," I responded. "It's special for them to share it with us!"

Paul's next comment was. "Ya, Mom, but they didn't even call you to ask if they could!" I guess having a family maturing is

hard on everyone, including the siblings left at home.

The morning that SaraKay and I drove Paul to Ricks, we unloaded his things, grabbed a hamburger, and headed home. Pretty soon she asked me, "Mom, when is Paul coming home?" I answered that he would be gone for a while. She inquired further trying to grasp whether I was meaning a day, a month, or longer. "Well, I said, it's going to be longer. He's in college now and won't be living with us anymore." It was quiet for a few minutes and I glanced in my rearview mirror to see if she was taking a nap. She was just sitting there in the middle of the seat with a big frown on her face. Pretty soon she replied, "I hate being the one left at home!"

September 16, 1996

[Mom] Last Monday evening we attended a Wood Badge "Beading" ceremony at Ben Hansen's. This event honors participants for successfully completing their goals. There were lots of family members and friends who came to show support. The honorees were asked to comment on their feelings about their experiences. It was interesting to hear the various responses in regards to things learned, friendships developed, and goals set. One common thread was the idea that their lives had been changed by Wood Badge; they recognized that they were a person of worth. That realization seemed to be the greatest discovery and benefit to those who took the course.

This observation has given me cause to reflect about the importance of each of us recognizing our importance to those around us and feeling like we make a difference for good. I guess my parents instilled within me those feelings of self-esteem and it's always a surprise when I discover that other people don't have that feeling of their own worth. This puzzles me since I am constantly impressed with the gifts and talents of others. I'm saddened that some people overlook their own strengths and feel inadequate. I'm going to recommit myself to being more vocal about the good I see in others.

Last week was board meeting. I thought it would be a routine one until I received an emotional phone call from a patron who asked if he could come by Monday night and go over a matter with me. I agreed. He had prepared a two-page letter to the board with statements supporting his argument for reconsideration of a matter we dealt with several months ago in Executive Session. I knew that I could not say anything about the issue because executive sessions are confidential and not to be discussed so I just listened as he presented his case and then asked if I would represent his side of the story at the board meeting on Tuesday. I agreed.

As a result of that item, our board meeting lasted until nearly eleven o'clock but the matter was largely left right where it was two months ago. I have been nervous about the matter, recognizing that it is the stuff law suits are made of but no one else seemed to feel it was worth reconsidering. I'm learning that there are many sides to every story and that there is a lot of grey area in decisions.

Although being on the school board is interesting, I would rather be home reading to SaraKay and talking over the track meet with Tim. It has been hard to be absent from family matters although Daddy is becoming very good at story time and answering Sunday night calls from kids when I have a youth fireside to conduct.

Wedding plans are moving ahead and the excitement is building. I get teary-eyed every time I think about being in the temple together. On the other hand, the realization

that some can't come and the circle won't be complete tempers my excitement.

It's a nice feeling each morning to survey yesterday's lists and see that one more item can be crossed off. We had originally planned to make a backdrop for the reception but last Saturday Daddy priced materials and said that it wasn't worth the money, time, and effort. He said to go to the caterer and rent it. Sounds good to me!

Some time ago as SaraKay began piano lessons again, she started complaining about practicing and going to early morning lessons without Tim. So, Daddy offered to take her on a Daddy/Daughter date if she would be more pleasant about her practice time and lessons.

About this same time Grandpa gave us tickets to a DARE magic show sponsored by the Blackfoot Police department so it was decided that this would be the date. Last Wednesday SaraKay arrived home with a birthday party invitation in hand and it just happened that the party was a few hours earlier on Saturday than the magic show started. I wasn't sure if she could handle that much excitement but we agreed to let her go to both events. I tried earlier in the day to get her to take a nap but she was so excited that she couldn't sit still, let alone sleep.

At one point she tried to convince me with, "I promise I won't get tired!" Tim (ever the astute big brother) retorted, "That's stupid! Nobody can promise not to get tired!" Well, she left for the party, wore herself out, returned home and promptly fell asleep sitting in the rocking chair. I let her sleep as long as I DARED, and then battled trying to get her hair combed and face washed so she looked presentable for the big date. Despite the rough beginning, it was a fun evening for them both.

Tomorrow Daddy and I are going to go to a cross country meet in American Falls for Tim. We have never attended one and he has wanted us to come. His coach hasn't been too pleased that he is taking off for harvest and keeps trying to talk him out of it but he has held firm on his commitment to work. Harvest really creates problems for our cross country team since they get so out of shape from the break, but most of the kids feel like Tim does and the coach is good to work with them.

Paul will be ordained an Elder this Sunday. He was recently sustained as priesthood quorum secretary in his college ward and is enjoying the association there of the other students. A year from now he could be in the mission field. Awesome thought!

Our prayers continue with Mike. We hope things will improve for him and that he can have a satisfying experience despite the difficulties he has encountered. I recall a similar experience Steve had with an Elder Thompson in his mission and how tough a time he had until they finally were able to resolve it.

I am leaving soon to go to the high school to look for Tim. He had cross country after school and he wasn't sure where they were going to be running so I'm supposed to leave here at four, drive to the track, check for runners, and if they are not there, check Jed Taylor's potato field, and if they are not there, check Hwy 39 toward Rockford. and if they are not there, check Ferry Butte road. Anyway, between 4 and 4:30 I need to locate him, grab his clothes and books, and get him into the dentist for an exam.

One last word of instruction he left before leaving at 6:30 this morning for basketball practice, "Mom, if you can't find me, DON'T go out on the football field and ask the football players if they have seen me. Okay...promise!" Best close with that. Mom

September 23, 1996

[Mom] It's a beautiful day outside although there is a chill in the air. When we packed for our trip to Provo last weekend, we took

coats and jackets, thinking that the weather there would be similar to what we have seen here. Not so. It was sunny and warm; so much so that the guys who attended the football game came home with good sunburns. While they enjoyed the game, Becky and I took care of wedding details.

Saturday night John took Paul and Tim to a play and Becky, Chet, Dad, and I had a nice visit. It was nice to use their apartment and not impose on roommates.

Steve drove down from Salt Lake to attend the game with the boys and then yesterday on our way through Salt Lake, we stopped at his place and I rode with Bonnie and Nathan while Rachel rode in our car. Bonnie is spending this week with her family in Idaho Falls while Steve goes on a business trip to New Mexico. She couldn't make the trip alone with Rachel and Nathan so it worked well to have our help.

It worked well for us, too, because we got to do a lot of visiting enroute. Wednesday, she will be coming with the kids and stay with us. SaraKay and Rachel enjoy each other and because it's harvest break, SaraKay's home.

We arrived home yesterday about noon, had lunch, put away our suitcases, attended choir practice, and went to our meetings. I guess there is some advantage to having a 3:00 meeting block. Hopefully next week we will be back in the stake center on our regular schedule.

Paul was presented in sacrament meeting to be ordained an Elder and he was ordained by his Dad. Grandpa Larsen stood in the circle as well as Daddy, the bishopric, Randy Cox, Jeff Cook, Ray Taylor and six of Paul's close friends. It was very touching to see the large circle of men surrounding him. I couldn't help thinking how symbolic it was of the many people who have surrounded him these last 18 years and encouraged and taught him what he needed to know. It was especially touching to see his friends since all of them have received the Melchizedek Priesthood in the last few months.

Paul has wonderful friends! I'm sure the bishop of their college ward will be grateful to have such a nice apartment of young men in his ward boundaries.

When we received Mike's weekly letter, we felt relieved that he is doing better. Tim has been writing to a girl who spent the summer here with her cousins, but who is from the Chihuahua area. In her last letter she mentioned Mike. I quote*, "The Saturday before we moved, we saw Mike's mission president and we gave him the box your parents sent. He said that he was very impressed with Mike cause usually missionaries who come from the states are really excited and are ready to work, but then after a few weeks they're ready to get out of there and can't stand it. But he said that Mike was not like that; he's always excited about everything and is always smiling and happy. And then we told him that Mike comes from a great family. And that's totally true. Even though we haven't met everyone."* That was a nice compliment to Mike and cheered us on the home front as well.

P.S. David ran in a IO mile run last Saturday in Dallas and took 14th out of over I 00 runners! Congratulations, Dave.

[Dad] This morning I was eating my French toast and Mom got out the blender to mix some powdered milk for Sara Kay's new puppy. She mentioned how it leaks all over and so I decided to use my ingenuity and vast array of tools to take it apart and fix it. Fortunately, it wasn't too difficult. I've been bothered by the whine the dryer was making, so I cleaned the lint trap and solved that problem. It is so nice to have a handyman like me around the house-- even if I say so myself.

You caught the mention of puppy in the previous paragraph. When Mom visited Brooke (she had her appendix out) SaraKay was so taken with some six or seven-week-old puppies there that they ended up bringing one home. One of SaraKay's duties is going to be cleaning up the messes in the garage until she can get the dog trained to go outside.

With winter coming on, the timing could have been better for adopting a puppy. But, it is sure fun to watch her with Lucky. SaraKay is going to smother him with love!

Yesterday we had a short staff meeting in Idaho Falls and then four of us went to Little Lemhi to work on the shower house. The walls are constructed of big lego blocks made of foam with a network of rebar throughout. Yesterday we filled the walls with cement and poured pads at each of the entrances. We used about 23 yards of cement and were extremely grateful for a pumper truck to get the cement into the walls instead of carrying it all up with buckets.

It was a great weekend in Provo. The BYU game was a neat experience. I was touched at halftime to see the BYU band bring a couple garbage cans full of pop to the Lobo's band. As I watched some of the antics of BYU fans, I couldn't help thinking about Mike all painted up with the "Y" on his face. I am sure proud to have him where he is, doing what he is doing.

September 29, 1996

[Dad] The last few days have been busy. Becky was here for about 24 hours and she and her mother were able to get a lot of details taken care of for the wedding.

Yesterday I was able to pull up the rest of the corn and get it chopped up, and get the fertilizer spread and ready to be tilled under. Also, I finished digging our own sorry potato patch and pulled the onions and put them out to dry. We were able to do quite a few other things around the house and yard while listening to BYU football.

Thursday night we had an Executive Board meeting for the Council in Pocatello. The announcements for the meeting went out on special paper with cookies watermark and the invitation to join us for cold milk and warm cookies. Robert and I baked cookies all night and kept everyone happy.

Wednesday night was a United Way kickoff barbecue in Pocatello. The Boy Scouts were responsible for it, so I helped Lynn set up tables and chairs, displays, gather chafing dishes, etc.

During the event we had to mingle and visit and then take everything down and put it away afterward. It was a nice event but the United Way management isn't really tied into the power structure of the community and it certainly wasn't effective as a kickoff event for the campaign they are just starting. There are a lot of things to know and consider when you are involved in fundraising campaigns.

Another thing we were able to do yesterday was to get potatoes. The harvest is going well, but they are still experiencing breakdowns and delays. They are about half through. Tim is running the sand machine and bearing up well under the responsibility. It's strange to just have one involved in harvest.

[Mom] Daddy mentioned some of our activities. Usually I spend harvest getting all my windows washed but this year the wedding has preempted that project. This morning when we had family prayer, I was praying and I just kept thinking of things that needed to be added. When we finally said Amen, Tim commented, "You almost ended your prayer three times, Mom". We have a lot of concerns lately with everything going on and we are grateful that we have all been protected.

We received word last night that David and Andrea moved into their new home Saturday and attended their new ward for the first time.

Tim is enjoying harvest and things seem to be progressing. Hopefully there will be good weather and a minimum of breakdowns and Tim will be able to attend the Priesthood session this Saturday with his Dad. I can't help comparing today's harvest with the days when we were farming and you oldest five kids were all working in the cellar until nine or ten each night.

Remember how Steve and David used to pull boards and push the spuds from the truck beds onto the conveyor belts. Remember when the Blackfoot News did an article on the harvest and featured a big picture of Stephani picking rocks. Remember what Jonie said the morning she found Steve and David weighing their potato chips on the mail scale to be sure no one got more than anyone else in their lunch? ("I'm ashamed to be a part of this family!")

Remember how Son Ignacio had a mad crush on Shauntel and would bring all sorts of candy to win her favor and Steve and David convinced her to act interested in him so that they could keep enjoying his candy. Well, a lot has changed since those days, but some things haven't; the dust when the wind is blowing, the comradery among the workers, and the wonderful smell of the newly dug spuds in the cellar.

SaraKay wants me to write a few words about her dog, Lucky. She's spent a lot of time playing with him last week and she's trying to get him to walk beside her on a leash. Usually she is running beside him while he takes her for a walk! She's enjoying having a pet and is anxious for her nieces and nephews to arrive so they can play with him too. She has been pretty bored aside from that diversion and is anxious for school to start. Yesterday was our annual Primary sacrament meeting program and she made sure we sat on the right side of the chapel so that we could see her sing the songs. It was our first Sunday back in our new building and the nine o'clock schedule again. Our building looks so nice with the new paint job and carpet and padded pews.

October 6, 1996

[Dad] We listened to Conference Saturday morning as we drove to Provo. John said he felt like with administrative duties in the Church he was losing his teaching skills. But, I feel that with regular scripture study and meditation it doesn't take much to pull them back and be effective. It has been particularly rewarding for me to have teaching roles the last few years. I really enjoy the challenge of the Church classroom.

We listened to the Saturday afternoon session in Provo while I helped Becky put up a couple mini-blinds that will give her privacy in her bedroom. We then loaded a few of her things that we were bringing back for the reception. When her neighbor saw us loading Becky's fichus tree, she offered us hers also, if we needed it. So, we had the van loaded with trees for the trip home. I was reminded of the song, *"I talk to the trees, but they don't listen to me,"* as I tried to visit with Sue on the way home that night.

It was fun to be able to go to the Priesthood session of conference with Steve and John.

Afterwards we HAD to go to Smith's to get ice cream! We were grateful for that time together while Sue, Bonnie, and Becky went to the bridal shower. We enjoyed playing with Nathan and Rachel. We missed having Tim with us; he was helping

Gary finish the potato harvest. We also thought about Paul on his own in Rexburg but knew it was an important study day for him.

I could hardly control my emotions as Bishop Edgeley talked about sending "our best" into the mission field. We love you, Mike, and appreciate the sacrifices that you are making.

I appreciate the strength of our relationships as a family. I recognize that much credit goes to your mother. I also give credit to the efforts each of you make as well. Victor Parachin said: *"The dynamic energy inherent in family life is not some modern-age discovery. Many centuries ago in ancient Greece its power was acknowledged by the philosopher Antisthenes, who observed: 'When brothers agree, no fortress is so strong as their common life.' Today there is widespread understanding of the importance of healthy and mutually beneficial family living. But having that knowledge still doesn't mean that the proper conditions for a strong family will just happen. Developing and maintaining strong family relationships require effort and attention."* He then goes on to share six characteristics common to strong families everywhere. The first is:

"Strong families are committed to making family life work. 'Looking out for No. I' never characterizes a healthy family. In a society where individualism can run rampant, strong families work together... Fundamental to their actions is a commitment to making their family healthy, happy, and strong. And this commitments is lifelong.

'Every close relationship requires attention,' says Dr. Andrew Schwebel, professor of psychology at Ohio State University and author of "A Guide to a Happier Family." *'The more we nourish it, the deeper the love and the greater our experience of joy. With that kind of tender care, as we age and children come and go, family relationships get stronger with time. Like an aging violin that has carefully been attended to, the music gets more beautiful."'*

[Mom] This past weekend we made a quick trip to Provo to pick up things from Becky's apartment, deliver some spuds, and attend a wedding shower that Chet's aunt held for Becky. It was nice to see Aunt Kathy, Leslie (Lane's wife) and her two little boys as well as Trish (Chad's wife) and her little girl. Two of Becky's mission companions attended as well as several old roommates, Bonnie, and Chet's mother, aunt, and cousin. Becky got some very nice gifts and it was fun to meet her mission companions and roommates.

It was nice to meet Chet's mom and get better acquainted. She is a lovely lady and was very gracious. It's wonderful to have our children marry into these sweet families; they will have that kind of association to bless their lives in the years ahead.

Daddy, John, and Steve attended the Priesthood session together. Tim finished harvest about five, hurried home, and made it to our own stake center for the priesthood session. When we got home Sunday morning about 1:00 a.m. Tim was asleep in the chair, still in his Sunday clothes. He has really been tired from harvest the last few days and anxious to have it over.

Yesterday at dinner he asked us how we were getting along financially with the wedding expenses. We told him that we were going to make it although things had been a little tight. He offered to let us use his harvest money if we needed it. I thought it was very sweet of him to be so generous.

It was wonderful to get to listen to all the sessions of conference! Thank goodness

for the miracles of modern technology. I'm amazed at the remarkable men and women who lead this Church! I was especially touched by the comments made by the Brethren in regard to women and their contributions to the kingdom. I know that there are many who question the issue of women and the priesthood; I'm sure many of the remarks came in response to those concerns. Personally I have always been grateful for the opportunities that I have been afforded by my church membership and my womanhood and haven't felt the need to take on additional responsibility. It pleases me to see the sweet response the Brethren give to the concerns brought to them.

I have thought that if nonmember women could read the priesthood manual and hear the instruction given to the men of the Church in regards to loving their families and being tender with their wives, that all the women in the world would want to join the church and be treated with such loving consideration. It has been one of the great joys of my life to have been raised with two worthy and noble fathers and to have been sealed to a husband who loves me and has sacrificed so much of his time, energy, and means for me and my children. Daddy is a fine example of all a priesthood holder should be and I have seen that same wonderful tenderness in my son-in-law's and sweet sons.

Following conference yesterday the film, "The Lamb of God" was shown. Although it was produced several years ago, I hadn't seen it before. It was a touching portrayal of the final days of Christ's life, his time before Pilate, his scourging and crucifixion. Although it is difficult to think about all He suffered in those final hours, I know it is important to be reminded of His love and sacrifice for each of us. I suspect that in the eternities ahead, each of us will be privileged to somehow be transported back in time to that night in the Garden of Gethsemane, to the betrayal, and to the crucifixion and that only then will we grasp the full magnitude of His suffering for us. I am so grateful to Him for all He did that we might have joy here and eternal life hereafter.

September 24, 1996

[Mom] Last night Daddy and I presented a session on Communications at the West Stake's Literacy Conference and the night before was our annual Young Women in Excellence Program. It's nice to have these events completed! Brenda Godfrey told me once that she could handle the stress of the special times if there were some quiet times in between to regroup. That is how I feel today. Daddy will be leaving for Utah for a training seminar on Friday and Saturday.

The wedding and all the festivities with so many of the family here were rewarding. For several months I have envisioned how it would be with nearly all of us in the temple and it was as wonderful as I had thought it would be. It doesn't seem possible that it's been three years since we were together in the Salt Lake Temple with Grandpa and Grandma's 50th wedding celebration.

We've had a lot of significant events transpire in those three years. Although the wedding about wore us out, we were thrilled with the results and appreciated each of your efforts to be here.

When Tim, SaraKay, and I left the airport after seeing Shauntel off on Sunday, Tim and SaraKay fell asleep and I was left with some quiet time to myself. It was sweet to think over the last few days and recall joyous arrivals, quiet talks, final preparations, and tears of joy. It was especially satisfying to feel the loving support of so many. I've had several ward members who attended the reception comment on what a thrill it was to be able to see the married children. Tony Watson

said that David came up and gave him a big hug and thanked him for his efforts in the scouting program and his influence in his life. Tony said that David will never know how much that meant to him.

We appreciated the opportunity to get better acquainted with Chet's family. They are wonderful people!

I really appreciated the support from the Larsen family. When I first realized that the Richards were not going to be able to be here for the wedding, I thought that I could live with it, but then when Rick and Terry and Gary and Linda both called and said they might not make it, I felt like sitting down and crying. It was so nice that Jeanie was coming and then to have Rick and Terry and Gary and Linda join us, too. Having Grandpa and Grandma Larsen there was wonderful; they are always so supportive.

On the way home from the airport I was playing the "What if" game. What if one of the grandchildren had gotten sick and the family couldn't have come," or "What if one of the flights would have been canceled?" or "What if Angela wouldn't have gotten over the flu by Friday morning?" What if in all our travels there would have been a bad accident?" I shouldn't be thinking about those things, but it does remind me of just how fortunate we have been that everything went as planned.

The newlyweds are back from their short but sweet honeymoon, the gifts have been opened, the borrowed items returned, and they are settling in to married life.

October 28, 1996

[Mom] Steve suggested that I send this letter E-mail to those of you who have an address and save myself some postage. That is probably what I should do although the process of getting the letter written, the envelopes addressed and stamped, and then delivering them to the post office is a weekly ritual that I'll miss. I now have two three-ring binders full of family letters. (Dad's comment: I told Mom to stay with the traditional means of communication because not everyone is online and no one reads their E-mail.)

Today I previewed a document that the school is going to send to the patrons of the district that outlines the rules/regulations of student access to the internet, complete with an E-mail address. I am pleased that our district is offering this to the students but it is interesting all the legal ramifications and rules that have to precede access.

I think it is becoming more and more important that we be committed to righteousness because the availability of destructive information is increasing and to police every individual and what they access is impossible. I'm sure that Lindsay learned about all this in his doctorate program and I am going to forward a copy of the proposed document to him for any suggestions.

Last Thursday Daddy left for a scout training in Utah and so I had a couple of lonely nights to catch up on my Young Women and school board reading. It is such a challenge to absorb all the information that comes and feel like I have some understanding of the issues. Next week I have a three-day convention in Boise and I'm hoping for some opportunities to go through the policy and procedure manuals of the district. It would be fun to have Daddy go with me but he is going to take care of the home front in my absence. We are still very much in the parenting business and I appreciate his willingness.

We had a big snow storm last week that left about four inches in its wake. It was cold enough in the ensuing days that it stuck but today's sun brought back a touch of fall.

Tim's teacher's quorum went on an overnighter to Wolverine Friday and although he was struggling with a cold, I encouraged him to bundle up and go. When the cold and snow increased as night came on, I repented and wished that he was home safe and warm. But, when he arrived home Saturday afternoon, he reported that they had thoroughly enjoyed the snow and slept fine. He is through now with cross-country and looking forward to the upcoming basketball season. So am I.

My friend at the post office, Steve Vanderkoi chuckled last week when I arrived with my usual "after family visits" packages to send off. Hopefully each of you have received what you left behind and aren't missing anything crucial. We are still having gifts for Chet and Becky brought to the house.

I am going to sign off and go try to scrounge up a Halloween costume for SaraKay. She thinks she wants to be a cat. It's pretty hard keeping up with the Jones (I mean the Bennions) when it comes to Halloween costumes.

[Dad] Sunday we forgot about changing our clocks back until Sue went to an early morning meeting and found out she was there at 6:30 instead of 7:30.

The Wood Badge Course Director's Conference that I was invited to attend in Utah last weekend was held at Camp Williams, the Utah National Guard facility at the point of the mountain below Salt Lake City. There were about 80 people there from Montana, Idaho, Utah, and Arizona. It was a fun conference with good sessions and food. Probably the greatest part of the experience is rubbing shoulders with such good people.

Last Wednesday was our presentation on family communications at the West Stake Literacy Fair. It was a nice event with great support from the stake. We were pleased with how our presentation went. Here are some of the quotes I used:

"As parents we must consciously commit ourselves to finding out who our children truly and deeply are rather than trying to conform them to who and what we wish they were or to extensions of our own egos. Children are not interchangeable 'lumps of clay' that can be molded into whatever we please. Rather, they are 'seedlings' that have their own separate and distinct gifts and potentials.

We can never change an oak into a pear tree. But we can watch and recognize as early as possible who they are--and then nourish and encourage them to be the best of whatever they are." --Richard & Linda Eyre

"No child will take the same journey as the parent and no parent can determine what a child's journey will be. We can have hopes for our children, and we all do. But I think the very best hope of all is that they will find fulfillment in their lives in their own ways, in accord with their distinct individualities." --Fred Rogers (from Mr. Roger's Neighborhood)

"The family forgives. It is the only place in our life where we can receive unconditional acceptance for just being us. Families accept even the loud aunt, the crazy uncle, the selfish brother, the arrogant sister, and all family members, just because they are family members." --Dr. Paul Pearsall

"Daddy would wake me up for breakfast about 7:30. Then we'd head outside to go for a drive. Daddy would get into the car and turn the ignition key. Inevitably, nothing would happen. He would push and pull every button on the dashboard, twist all the knobs and pump the accelerator, but the motor still wouldn't start. At length he would sigh and say to me, 'Honey, the car just won't start until you give me a kiss.' So I did, and it did--and off we went. For a long time I believed there was some kind of

scientific connection between kissing and car-starting." --Jack Benny's daughter, Joan

November 4, 1996

[Mom] It's Monday morning. Daddy just left for a staff meeting, Tim and SaraKay are at school and I am here at home puttering around and having fun. It feels so good to have the pressures of the wedding over and my schedule more manageable. It's satisfying to take care of things that I've postponed, such as doing up all the boxes of apples that had accumulated. Saturday, SaraKay and I did 32 quarts of applesauce while we listened to BYU beat UTEP. It's nice to have something fun to do (listen to BYU win) while I do something not so fun (making applesauce).

The really nice thing was that SaraKay helped me. I poured the hot apples into the juicer and she stood on a chair and pushed the plunger while I turned the handle. She was wearing a "tiger ear" apron and part way through she got so hot from the steam that she got a headband and pushed her bangs back off her forehead. I didn't realize how funny she looked until the doorbell rang. She went to get it and the person at the door took one look at her and got this great big smile on her face. We both had a good laugh over it and when Sara Kay looked in the mirror, she laughed too.

Tim worked at Randy's for nearly 12 hours Saturday and only quit because they had a breakdown. He quite enjoys the work and really enjoys the money. His best friend, Shane Jenks, was competing at state cross country and was gone for the weekend so Tim filled the time working. I think the pallet job is going to be an answer for him since his ball practicing schedule will make it hard for him to hold a grocery store job.

When we were together for the wedding, Tim talked with Rick about investing some of his savings in mutual funds and so last week he filled out the forms and did it. It is a very low risk investment and hopefully will do a little better for him than the interest he was getting at the bank. Just two more weeks and he will be trying out for the JV basketball team. He's hoping to get his spot again this year. He has a lot of good friends on both JV and Varsity and that makes it all the more inviting to be a part of. Also, his good friend and mentor, Neil Hillman is the coach.

Last Tuesday was our Halloween YW/YM party. I enjoy skating and was really looking forward to the chance to participate. As I left for the party, Daddy last words to me were, "Be careful and don't get hurt!" I took the advice and tried hard to not get injured or make a fool of myself. Although it took me a few minutes to get my bearings, soon all my old skills came back and I had a wonderful time!

During one girl's choice skate, I asked Tim to be my partner and we had a fun time skating together. I was complimented when he asked me, "Mom, where did you learn to skate like that!" Later, as I was thinking about the evening, I thought back about the times my Dad took me ice skating. Once, after Thanksgiving, we went to Uncle Stu's in Trenton and went ice skating on the Bear River. We skated for what seemed like miles down the river. The thing that kept us moving was the sound of popping under us as we skimmed along the ice. I had this fear that one of us would fall through and drown, but I trusted that Daddy wouldn't put us in harm's way.

Some winters he would take us to a nearby canal and we would build a fire on the ice to warm ourselves and then we'd skate up and down the canal. I had a pair of white figure skates that I was proud of and Grandpa Arch had some black and brown hockey skates that he wore.

He showed me how to turn corners by crossing one leg over the other and how to

swing around and skate backwards with a gentle movement of the hips and legs. Later, when an ice pond was made at Pioneer Park in Shelley, I enjoyed showing off when I went skating with my friends.

It's nice to know that I can still do something athletically after all these years of inactivity. If we took the young people swimming, it would be a different story since I am totally spastic when it comes to water.

Last year, while watching SaraKay take swimming lessons, I decided that I was going to learn to swim; that is going to be one of my goals for next year. I have certainly had good examples in both Grandpa Arch and Daddy since they both are very good swimmers.

It's been fun to associate with the YW. I can't help worrying as I see some of them making wrong choices. I recently read a talk by Dallin Oaks on "Error vs. Transgression" in a recent Ensign issue. He explains how the Lord judges us differently on blatantly turning from the light we have received and on making errors in judgement. The sad thing is that whether it is one or the other, we still suffer the consequences of our actions. I know that most of what I'm seeing in these YW are errors in judgement but I also know that Satan truly does "lie in wait to deceive." Another frustration I'm encountering is that these YW's mothers are sometimes not much wiser than their daughters and I'm having to influence the mothers before I can the daughters. It's a challenge and I remind myself that we each have our agency and that it can't be violated.

Wednesday I'm leaving for Boise for a School Board Convention. There are a multitude of fears that I'm trying to overcome just to attend this convention. Such things as having the right clothes, taking care of travel, finding the hotel in a strange city, checking in and out, being alone to attend the sessions and banquets, and feeling awkward about some of the group sessions because of my limited experience and knowledge. I'm trying to move ahead and not be intimidated by all of this but I usually have Daddy at my side to take care of details and this time I won't. I know it's good for me to get out of my "comfort zone!"

Let me tell you a cute story about Paul. He called and said that he had an interesting experience at an engineering competition. His engineering group was comprised of two girls and two boys, none of whom were very gifted in building things.

The upcoming competition required that they build some sort of apparatus that would toss three different sizes of balls prescribed distances. They worked for nearly seven hours trying to perfect their machine but finally gave up since they couldn't get it to be accurate consistently.

As they left the study session discouraged and certain of defeat the following day, they all agreed that they would pray that night that they would at least make it through the competition without being too humiliated with their apparatus. The next day at the competition, they hit the target directly twice and were within a few inches on several other attempts. They placed second to their complete surprise and amazement! I guess the moral of that story is "Prayer works even when math doesn't" or something like that.

November 10, 1996

[Dad] This has been an interesting week!! It was tough to get along without Sue who was in Boise for three days. I came to appreciate more vividly the load she carries. I was pleasantly surprised on Saturday morning when she called and said she was in Fort Hall on her way home;

I wasn't expecting her to leave Boise until noon!

Darvel finished John's car and we were able to drive it around a little this week to make sure they had connected everything up properly. We then made arrangements to meet him in Tremonton on Friday night to trade for the "Blue."

After visiting with him for a little bit at the Arctic Circle SaraKay said she wasn't feeling well and wanted to go home. I got her settled in the back seat with a blanket over her and headed for home. As we reached Pocatello, she started coughing and then threw up all over her coat, the blanket, her shirt, her hair, the back seat of the car--about three gallons of crud! When we got home it took me about an hour and a half to clean her up and get her into bed and then to clean up all the rest of the mess. She still isn't totally well, but has been doing much better today.

We had Stake Conference this weekend. It was the first conference for our new Stake Presidency because of the Area Conference we had at the minidome. We are so blessed to be surrounded with such good people in a community where the gospel is such an integral part of life.

Our favorite football teams both won on Saturday. Snake River won their tournament game with Sugar by a score of something like 49-6. They play Jerome in the state semi-finals next week. Bishop Kelly will probably be their opponent in the championship game the following week.

Yesterday, I tried to clean out our chimney for the wood burning stove. I always dread climbing up on the roof and standing on top of the chimney as I clean it out. But this time I ran into problems. There was a bird's nest down in the chimney as well as all the creosote buildup. I kept knocking things down further and further until I am down to about ground level and have a plug that just will not give. The chain and bar combination that has always won for me in the past is not cutting it. Then, to compound the problem, our furnace has quit. So, we don't have any form of heat today and tonight. Hopefully, tomorrow we can solve one of the problems before the temperature in our home drops too low.

The fourth secret of strong families is: *Strong families express love and appreciation for each other. A clear, consistent flow of gestures and words conveys love and appreciation for each other. People who grow up in such homes know they are loved and valued. They have no uncertainty.*

[Mom] It's good to be home. Attending the Idaho School Board Association's annual convention was an interesting experience for me. I met a lot of new people from all over the state, collected a suitcase full of handouts from exhibitors, and participated in a wide variety of seminars dealing with everything from gang awareness to agricultural programs. It was interesting to see educational leaders in Idaho grapple with the never-ending problems that challenge our schools. We heard from various motivational speakers, honored a "Teacher of the Year" and "Volunteer of the Year", and voted on resolutions which will be taken to the legislature for consideration. It was intriguing to see the formulating of policies and procedures from start to finish.

The thing that I didn't enjoy about my trip was all the sitting, being away from family, and wearing Sunday clothes for three days. It felt good to put on my levis and a baggy shirt for the drive home Saturday. Although the sessions weren't over until noon, Elzo and Renee White were anxious to get home for the Snake River football game, and so they talked me into leaving a few hours early. They didn't have to talk very hard.

Daddy and Company got along just fine except for the 24-hour flu bug that SaraKay

caught. Daddy worked hard to keep things clean and the wash done and had done a good job as "Mr. Mom." I was sorry to miss the visit with John when cars were swapped, but Thanksgiving is just around the corner and he and Paul will soon be home for that.

This morning about 8:30 I received a phone call from Sally Pretl. She is the mother of one of Mike's good friends, Matt. Matt is the only one of Mike's old group who hasn't chosen to serve a mission and his parents have been heart-broken with this decision. He ended up going to ISU his freshman year and it weakened his resolve to live the gospel and serve a mission.

Sally read a letter that they received from Mike. It was a plea for Matt to put aside the things of the world, exercise faith in the Lord and in himself, and prepare to enter the mission field. It was so beautifully written and full of good counsel and love. Sally commented that she and Leonard appreciated the sentiments expressed and wanted us to know how much they had been praying for something to soften Matt's heart. It was a teary conversation. I couldn't help thinking about a phrase in Mike's patriarchal blessing that tells him *"There are people in this world who will be influenced by your behavior...by the example which you shall live, and the words that you shall write, and the thoughts which you shall express. You shall be a profound influence in their lives."* Carry on, Mike.

My visiting teachers came this morning with a birthday gift. I appreciated their kindness. It is a source of satisfaction to belong to a fine community and to feel people's love.

Last week when the movers came with my new stove, I recognized one of the workmen. Before he finished, he inquired about Stephani and Shauntel. His name was Mark Evans and he had worked with them at Kesler's. It was fun to reminisce about old times.

November 17, 1996

[Dad] Strong families expect problems and resolve them creatively. *"Don't expect your family to be heaven on earth (and) perpetual peace and harmony,"* says Robert H. Schuller in his book, "Power Ideas for a Happy Family." *"Expect conflict; it doesn't mean your family is sick--it is...a sign of growth and a symbol of change."*

No family is immune to changes and challenges. There will be difficult experiences of death, divorce, disability, the demise of a job. Yet, strong families know how to respond in comforting, healing ways.

Ten-year-old Rachel DeMaster has juvenile diabetes. Although she deals well with her condition, Rachel has this concern: *"Sometimes I wonder if when I grow up anyone will want to marry me because my children may have diabetes."*

Here is the creative and affirming way Rachel's family has heard and responded to her fear: *"My mother told me it won't be a problem because when people are in love, the relationship comes first. My brother says I shouldn't even be thinking about marriage for another 15 years. In the meantime, it's O.K. because, no matter what happens, I'm still me."*

Not only does our family have the ability to resolve problems in a creative way and be supportive of each other, but the Gospel adds a dimension of perspective through which we view problems. Everything doesn't have to be made all right, right now. We have time to work things through, we have the power of the Atonement to resolve problems relating to transgressions, and we know that separation due to death is temporary because of the sealing powers of the priesthood. Other problems can be solved

because of the healing power of the priesthood, through faith, or through the continued love and support from the family--emotionally and physically.

As our family grows and matures, I can see a greater reservoir of resources there to assist each other in coping with whatever difficulties may arise. Communication is essential to bringing about that support. Going it alone doesn't allow other family members to extend the love, means, or emotional support they may have to offer.

I appreciate your mother's continual efforts to be involved in each of your lives and show interest and concern, counsel when necessary, and when appropriate--what small financial support we can give. Because of our conversations, I know each of you are willing to reach out in the same ways, depending on your own limitations. Thank you for your attitudes and willingness--we never know when events will initiate a need for that succor. But again, I believe it is the ongoing communication that keeps us sensitive to those needs in each other and the ready resources available.

As this Thanksgiving season I am ever so thankful for the bounteous blessings of the Lord to me and my family! The election process arouses gratitude for the checks and balances in our system of government. The fall colors and stark beauty remind me how thankful I am to live in this part of the world. Mike's experiences make me mindful and grateful for pure water, hot water, washing machines, a warm bed, a relatively insect-free home, food of my choice, and on and on.

I am grateful for phones, computers, electricity, cars, and so many other things available for my use that I don't have to make from scratch, or invent, or even totally understand to be able to use. Most of all, I am thankful for a loving family--obedient to the Lord; generous and loving toward each other; and so talented, capable, and blessed in so many ways.

[Mom] Tim is home from school today because of some water problems at the high school. He was happy about the unexpected vacation, but voiced immediate concern that he hoped they wouldn't cancel ball practice, too. To his relief, he received word this morning that ball practice is on.

Last weekend we took a quick trip to visit the Tooele branch of the family. On Thursday Steve called and said that he had some complimentary tickets to a Jazz game and wondered if Dad or Tim would like to go with him. Tim responded with a resounding, "Yes!" We had originally scheduled to leave here about 3:30 or 4:00 on Friday, but this 7:00 Jazz game put us on a tighter time-table and required us to leave promptly at 4:15 if we were to meet Steve at the prescribed "NE corner of the Delta Center at 7-7:15."

Complicating our trip was a call from the superintendent informing me that we had a case of tuberculosis diagnosed in a sixth grade class and there was to be a meeting in the middle school of teachers, administrators, and parents in regard to the testing and procedures that would need to be followed to avert an outbreak. Wow? What next!

I felt that I needed to be to that meeting and so we were juggling packing, meetings, work, and school in an effort to get away. To complicate matters, we ran into bad weather and a traffic jam in the Layton area that slowed us down. By the time we arrived at our destination, I felt like my stomach was tied in a knot. Fortunately, we made our connection with Steve and he and Tim had an enjoyable time together.

The rest of our trip was much more leisurely and we enjoyed our brief visit with Becky who had driven from Provo despite the weather, and with Bonnie and the grandkids. It was a treat to get to see

Steve and Bonnie's new home and spend the night.

They are gracious hosts and we were grateful for the brief time together. They have a lovely and functional home. Steve has about a 20 minute drive to work.

Saturday morning we toured a grist mill in Tooele which has recently been restored and turned into a museum. It was originally erected by Ezra T. Benson in 1849, a couple years after the pioneers arrived in the valley. The original construction was done with wooden pegs and rawhide much the same as the Tabernacle on Temple Square. It was nearly two years in construction and most of the original machinery is still in the mill. It was inspiring to think of the ingenuity of those early pioneers and their ability to create what they needed to sustain life in a wilderness.

Daddy has a scout training in Dallas in March and I've a national school board convention in California in April so we are hoping to see those families then. Shauntel and I discussed the possibility of me flying out when the baby arrives. But, we may opt for the whole family driving out. We decided to cross that bridge when the time came. Waiting for the arrival of an adoptive baby takes a lot of patience!

It has been interesting for me to be involved on the school board. I have talked with Shauntel and Becky about their experiences dealing with at-risk kids and the supportive services in the schools. It has also been interesting to visit with the rest of you children about the schools in your areas. It pleases me that all of you are concerned about the schools your children will be attending.

The situation with Grandpa and Grandma Richards has been a concern. I've watched what was happening in the Hanford area with the buy-out by Lockheed and the ramifications it has had for Uncle Nate and Don. Construction in the area has dropped off to the point that work is scarce. Nate is feeling like he needs to relocate. Don has survived several lay-offs but the work load has become so intense that he doesn't feel like he can continue.

In the meantime, Grandpa Richards' health has improved and he and Grandma are feeling like they could give some temple service if they lived in an area with a temple. We are wondering if Grandpa and Grandma would be better off in Salt Lake, close to the central genealogical library and temple. This change would necessitate selling their home, liquidating some of their belongings and locating a condo in Salt Lake.

Although I would love to have them closer, I worry about the stress on them in making all the preparations for a move. They are both enjoying good health at the present time and I don't want another move to upset that. I also want them to do what they feel is best for them. They are getting older but they are both very alert and able to know what would be best.

November 25, 1996

[Mom] This morning we had our weekly YW presidency meeting and reviewed the upcoming activities for the month of December. Our agenda, single-spaced, filled one whole page. This YW job keeps me feeling pretty overwhelmed. Thanksgiving weekend should be a change of pace and a chance to relax. We are looking forward to having John and Paul here.

Shauntel is spending the day with friends since Randy will be on call. Steve and Bonnie are going to Logan for a family get-together, Chet is working so he and Becky will go to West Jordan, David and Andrea will enjoy a day with their little ones, Jonie and Jeff will spend the day with his folks, and Steph and Linds will spend the day at home giving Linds some respite from his

heavy work schedule. And then there is Mike who may not even remember that the country to the North is taking the day off to give thanks and enjoy a turkey dinner.

This past week was a very busy one for me with school business. Our monthly board meeting was on Tuesday evening and then we had two three-hour sessions on Wednesday and Thursday evenings where we met with about 60 teachers, patrons, administrators, and students, and formulated our goals for the upcoming year.

A few weeks ago I received a proposed policy on implementing the Internet in our schools for use by teachers and students. It was a list of rules, regulations, and disciplinary actions that would be taken if the rules were violated in regards to using the internet. As school board members, we were to preview the document and get back to the superintendent with any suggestions or reservations we had. The document has been gleaned from several other districts who were also in the process of grappling with technology. My first thought was to ask Linds about it because I knew that he would have come in contact with this sort of thing in his schooling. I sent him a copy of the policy and last Tuesday morning he called and went over with me his impressions of the document and what he thought it lacked. He gave me people to contact, web sites to refer to, and suggestions for improvements. I really appreciated his input and felt like I had something of value to contribute that night at board meeting.

The next day the person in the district who is over the technology called and ask for the information and I gave it to him for reference. It dealt with programs that are in place by various concerned groups who see a need to filter the information on the "net" so that sites with “adult content only” information could not be accessed by the students. There was also information about a group who rate sites much as movies are rated and hence users can decide if it is appropriate. I really appreciated Lindsay's time and expertise!

It was interesting to participate in the conference and hear the employees of the school voice their concerns. The top priority items were teaching values, having a safe environment, teaching basics, including vo-tech classes, and maintaining a competent teacher's corps.

It was interesting to see the changes that education has gone through in the last few years since I served on the Aids curriculum committee. I remember one meeting in which the assistant superintendent let us all know that values were not and could not be taught in public schools. What a change has taken place in that philosophy the last few years especially with the rise in juvenile crime and problems. I keep reminding myself to make my own judgements on issues because sometimes the prevailing philosophy is not right and I don't want to be swept along with the crowd. It's a challenge sorting issues out and deciding where to stand on them.

Last weekend was exciting as both our favorite teams won: Snake River won their third state championship and BYU beat Utah. Tim and Daddy have been anxiously watching the ratings and hoping for a good bowl seat. Tim will find out tomorrow about his basketball tryouts. He feels like he will make it but there is a new boy that has moved in that is very good so Tim is worrying a little about making first string.

[Dad] Last night when I called John he mentioned that their respiratory division at the hospital is going through a major transition brought on by the technology that is now available. He is in the thick of it and trying to help the administrators motivate workers to learn to use the computers and other new equipment. He

said that it is a major problem to get people to change.

November 26, 1996

[Dad] I can't believe it's almost Thanksgiving. Where has this year gone!!

Tim had BB practice last night so there was just SaraKay, Mom and me for Family Home Evening. We had a lesson about Thanksgiving and tried to think of things we were thankful for that started with each letter of the alphabet. It reminded me of a lot of things I am thankful for that I usually don't think about.

The biggest thing I am thankful for is you! My family is such a source of joy and satisfaction and fulfilment. So here comes the sixth and final secret of strong families: Strong families know how to ask for what they need. Members have the courage and the freedom to make such requests. *"Asking for what we need acknowledges the importance of both the actor and the action,"* explains therapist Donna M. Brown.

"When we fail to ask, inevitably some of our needs go unmet and anger and resentment build," says Brown. *"Family therapists often spend a great deal of time teaching family members to ask one another for the things they need, from affection to a simple household chore."*

So let me review the "Six Secrets of Strong Families" by Victor Parachin:

•*Strong families are committed to making family life work.*

•*Strong families communicate effectively.*

•*Strong families forgive and accept each other.*

•*Strong families express love and appreciation for each other.*

•*Strong families expect problems and resolve them creatively.*

•*Strong families know how to ask for what they need*.

He concludes with this thought: *"We can evoke meaning and beauty from life in many ways. It is the family, however, which probably adds the deepest dimension to living. This is so because, within the family, people are most likely to experience what they need and want the most: to love and be loved."*

Not particularly new thinking, but certainly an able expression of my sentiments and life's learnings from my experiences. No matter what fulfilment and rewards we get from work or church callings, or volunteerism, or other pursuits--nothing can compete with the satisfactions and peace that come from a loving and accepting family. Thank you, each of you, for the depth of meaning and purpose you give my life.

December 2, 1996

[Mom] We heard from all of you last weekend, including Jonie who needed a recipe for rolls since that was her share of the Harper Thanksgiving feast. I told Daddy that it made me feel good that she was using some of the skills I taught her. In the course of the conversation I mentioned that Jonie was an Indian and SaraKay said, "Who is an Indian?" and we said, (pointing to her picture on the picture board) "Jonie." SaraKay responded, "She isn't an Indian. Where is her hat?" We explained that some Indians don't wear hats (headdresses.) It was surprising that her knowledge of Indians was so limited.

It was nice to know that each of you found a way to enjoy the holiday, with or without family, and that it gave us all a chance to break from our normal routine. We decided to rent some videos and relax with a good movie. We saw "Mission: Impossible",

“Fugitive," and "My Fair Lady." It was fun but every few minutes we paused in "Mission:Impossible" and ask Daddy what was going on. It was especially fun to have John and Paul here to enjoy it with us.

Saturday we watched USC beat Notre Dame in an exciting 4th quarter battle and overtime! Of course, we were cheering for USC so that BYU might be invited to a major bowl game instead of Notre Dame, but Daddy doesn't think it will make any difference.

Friday night when we listened to the weather, it was forecast that Sunday would be stormy. I tried to influence John to return to Provo Saturday night and avoid the storm, but he didn't want to. Yesterday morning dawned cold, snowy and windy. He and David and Jennifer Hammond left for Provo about 8:30 am and I wondered what kind of weather they would have. Sometimes the worst stretch of road between here and Provo is between here and Riverside Boot and Saddle! Last night when I called he admitted that the whole trip was the same with blowing snow, freezing temperatures, and sometimes zero visibility. Thank goodness they got home safely.

Paul left at 3:30 and had basically the same kind of conditions going to Rexburg. Today it is sunny and nice although cold enough that the snow is sticking. We have already had quite a bit of moisture this year and I hope that it will back off at Christmas time and let our company get here safely.

Yesterday the Bishop visited our Laurel class during lesson time. Usually when he comes in the girls show respect and mind their manners, but yesterday most of them were in a contrary mood and were hard to manage and get to respond. By the time the lesson was over I was ready to "wring some necks"! Later I realized how much baggage each girl brings to class in the form of situations at home, relationships with peers, associations with parents, and problems with life in general. Life really presses on them in the same way it presses on me and sometimes "the world is too much with us" on Sundays and we don't pull away enough to really worship and get renewed. It is a continuing challenge.

[Dad] It’s hard to believe that Mom has signed off already. She usually has so much to say to you kids, but I guess she has said most of it over the phone. We had a sweet Thanksgiving weekend. It was different to just have six of us here, but it was nice to have the time for Paul and John. What fine young men they are! And I'm not at all biased!!

One of the most satisfying things for me last week was to get a few things done around here. I took Wednesday off and was able to get the back garage door fixed that we had boarded up so that we could use it in attending to Lucky's needs. Then Tim and I were able to get the plastic over the dining room door to stop the cold wind blowing through there.

We fixed up the dog house and repaired the holes in the roof and fixed his dish on a leash so he couldn't haul it all over. Then I fixed a nice bed for him with a triple layer of egg carton foam and a blanket and stapled it down so he couldn't pull at it. It will insulate him from the cold ground! It lasted two days, then he started shredding the blanket and the foam and spreading it for Christmas decorations around our yard. Dumb dog!!!

The other project that I had been working on--the new pilot syllabus for the Varsity Wood Badge Course--was the last major project of the weekend. After spending big blocks of time on it Thursday and Friday, I finally finished about midnight.

Sue and I took it to Idaho Falls so that our Council printer could get started on it. That’s been a big project but has taught

me a lot about Word Perfect! It was satisfying to get it completed. While in Idaho Falls we were able to get some Christmas shopping done.

In my Sunday School class we're talking about Ether. We had a sweet spirit in class as we talked about the power of prayer, the faith of the brother of Jared, and the Lord chastising him for not praying to him for four years. As we read Ether 3:1 I gave each of them a polished quartz stone. I challenged them to remember the Brother of Jared and the faith he had, even to seeing the finger of the Savior and then all of Him as He would appear in the meridian of time. I want them to think of that every time they see that stone.

Some of the boys reminded me of other things I had given them as object lessons when they were Blazers, and that they still had them. One of the greatest payoffs for a teacher is seeing the Gospel bear fruit in their student's lives. As they recognize the stabilizing force of the Church in the maelstrom of sin and temptation that surrounds them, they will be blessed.

As I contemplated the many blessings I enjoy this Thanksgiving, I counted you at the top of the list. Each of you are such a joy to us! I thought about the juxtaposition of Thanksgiving and Christmas. I don't think that it is a coincidence. With your heart filled and overflowing with gratitude for your blessings, you are naturally led to feelings of generosity and giving--sharing what you have to bring joy to others with no thought of what you will get in return.

December 9, 1996

[Mom] Shauntel called last night to visit with Daddy on his birthday and mentioned that Randy was driving a student from BYU to the airport following his interview for acceptance into the medical school there. It's nice to be on this side of that process instead of the other. This semester has been very intense since Randy has had hands-on experience in several different areas including psychiatry, and ob/gyn, and sometimes he will be at the hospital for 24-30 hours straight.

Last week Tim had his first two games of the season. They lost to Blackfoot by four points and beat Shelley by about 20. Tim started in the Blackfoot game but didn't start in the Shelley game although he played his share of the time and did very well. He is worried about keeping his position since another young man moved into the school district who is also a very fine guard. It has been a trying experience for Tim. Daddy and I spent quite a bit of time with him last night talking through the situation and his response to it and hopefully he will be able to move ahead with confidence in his abilities. He is a very fine athlete and does a good job for the team.

He has another game tomorrow which I will miss because of a service project to a rest home with my Laurels. Next week I have a school board meeting and will miss that one, too. When I mentioned to Tim that I would have to miss his next two games, he said that it was alright. I had to clarify with him that it may be alright with him but it certainly was not alright with me. I love going to his games and cheering him on!

One of the highlights of last week was attending the Rick's College Musical Christmas Concert sponsored by the choirs on campus. Paul is in Men's Chorus and was able to get tickets for Tim, SaraKay and me (Daddy had a Wood Badge training meeting.) School was closed Thursday because of a bad blizzard. After the storm, extremely cold weather set in and the roads around here were sheer ice. I called Candice Clegg to see if we could catch a ride with them and it worked out for us to travel together although I did the driving. Luckily, all the freeways were clear and we got along fine.

I hadn't realized until I got to the concert that there were four performances and that if we had known, we could have arranged to go on Thursday so Daddy could have gone with us.

Taking SaraKay was a mistake since she was so tired that she could hardly function. She fell asleep on the ride to Rexburg and we had to awaken her to get her into the concert. After a few numbers, she fell asleep in the concert and I worried that she would start snoring. Following the concert, we had to awaken her and nearly carry her to the car.

The concert was fabulous! Prelude music was played by a brass band that Daddy would have loved! The orchestra did several numbers and during one combined choir and orchestra number, little flakes of fake snow fell down onto the audience from the ceiling. It cascaded through the rays of the spotlight and looked just like a beautiful snowfall. One number included a modern interpretive dance. It was fascinating. I wished Sara Kay would have been awake to see it.

There were several choirs including a Men's Chorus, Girls' Choir, Concert Choir, and Collegiate Chorale. The numbers were varied and ranged from classical to humorous. John would be interested to know that they performed the African chant "Bet le him oo." I think it was the same one the BYU Men's Chorus did when John was there.

The final number was so beautiful that I felt like I was transported beyond the veil. I appreciated Paul inviting us. I couldn't help thinking how fortunate he is to practice those songs over and over again and have them be a part of his Rick's College experience. They have been asked to perform at April conference and he is looking forward to that.

[Dad] To have BB start again adds a lot of zest to our lives. It is exciting to be a part, even vicariously, of those athletic events. One of the fringe benefits of having your mother on the school board is that she has a pass that gets her in to all the games free. I enjoy watching Tim play. He is always so calm, cool, and collected. I am trying to follow his example and be that way at ball games also.

I was sure sorry to have to miss Paul'concert. My Wood Badge was an excellent meeting. I met the rest of the staff and made a presentation about the "ticket" and handed out the staff guide that I had worked on so much. I am really impressed with the staff that Dave Fullmer has pulled together!

The snow closure last week was a surprise. We don't usually get a storm like that this early in the season. Since that storm it has warmed up and rained and much of the snow is melted, but we have deep slush in our drive-way.

I celebrated the fourth anniversary of my fiftieth birthday (yes, that means I am 53) last week. I appreciated the phone calls, cards, and gifts that I received. Thanks to each of you for making it such a special day.

December 16, 1996

[Dad] Yesterday was cold and dreary. We had good meetings and choir practice and then a Stake Choir Festival last night. Our choir was last and we did the Beebe Sounds version of "Joy to the World" with choir and congregation. It was wonderful! Debbie Ellis does a fine job with our choir but I still miss singing for your mother. She is really involved with the YW and doing a great job of reaching the girls.

Today, we received the Bennion letter with some pictures in--what handsome, good-looking grandkids!

Last Tuesday SaraKay and I went to Tim's ball game with South Fremont. He did a

great job and got 11 points. After last week's performance and our talks with him I think he feels better about his role on the team. It has been especially nice for me to have him in my Sunday School class this year.

We received his report card last week and it was all A's. He said that eight of the players on the JV team have straight A report cards. I think that is incredible. He really does associate with a fine group of kids.

Wednesday was the final orchestra rehearsal prior to our concert on Friday. Our concert conflicted with the ward party. Sue spent most of the day Friday decorating and making other preparations for the ward party. Then Sue and I went to the concert and Tim and SaraKay went to the party. They had a good time and SaraKay was able to share her wish list with Santa.

The orchestra played "Beethoven's Ninth Symphony," "Emperor Waltz Op. 437" by Strauss, and accompanied the community choir for "White Christmas." Sue and I were in the choir also and sang "The Holly and the Ivy," and "Carol of the Bells." For "White Christmas" I played trumpet for the introduction and then joined the choir to sing the rest.

Saturday we did more Christmas shopping and finished up tasks around here. It was a good catch-up day. Hopefully, we can finish shopping before Christmas gets here. We are excited about having family start to come in this weekend. Paul and John are involved in their finals this week, so remember them in your prayers.

Tonight is the Council staff Christmas party in Idaho Falls. It is catered by O'Callahan's from the Shilo Inn and should be a great feed and a lot of fun also.

We've received three letters from Mike last week. They come in spurts. It's so good to hear from him. He has really been blessed with a lot of success and is about due to be made senior. With that move, he will have the control of his work activities and time that he has been asking for and will see dividends.

[Mom] I've been baking rolls, bread, and broccoli soup to deliver to some of our friends. When SaraKay and I went to piano lessons this morning, we delivered some to Lona Mae and she really made a fuss about it. It's a challenge to remember friends with some token at Christmas and yet keep the cost within what we can afford. I enjoy this time of year, but this year has been extremely stressful with all the demands of my YW calling.

Hopefully each of you received last week's letter about Steve and Bonnie's exciting news. We're so happy for them and pleased to see our family continue to grow. Bonnie has had the flu this week and been pretty miserable but hopefully she will feel well enough to join us for Christmas and be in Idaho Falls for her sister's farewell on Dec. 29th.

I had a ridiculous experience last week trying to deliver some goodies to the Taylor family. As a Laurel class, we are doing "the Twelve Days of Christmas" for the Ray Taylor family since this is their first Christmas without Jenny. She died of cancer earlier this year. I made daily assignments to all the Laurel class and my day was last Friday. I arranged with Ray to put the goodies in the van in the garage. He told me to open the garage since they leave it unlocked.

Brooke was home sick that day so I drove to the house by a less traveled road, pulled up to the garage, quietly lifted the door, and tip-toed in when from around the corner came three humongous dogs, barking and running into the garage, up to the back door, and who began eating out of a 100-pound dog food sack. I had a

sinking feeling that my well-orchestrated plan was about to go awry.

I knew I couldn't leave the dogs in the garage, but how was I going to get them out? I tried "Shoo, shoo, shoo." Didn't work. I tried putting some dog food in my hand and baiting them out, but they had no interest in it. I thought about grabbing their collars and hauling them out but every time I got close, one of them would growl a threatening, low guttural sound so I decided against that tactic.

I thought about leaving the garage door open and leaving the dogs inside, but I wasn't sure if too much dog food would make a dog bloat and I didn't dare risk it. I was running late and knew that I couldn't wait until they wandered out for a breath of fresh air, so I finally decided to knock on the door and explain my predicament to Brooke, who knew the dogs and helped me solve the crisis. Anyway, Friday's delivery was not quite as secretive as I had wanted it to be, but keep in mind that it's the thought that counts.

December 31, 1996

[Mom] I was interested to see what stories the PARADE section had highlighted as some of the most newsworthy of the year. Our local paper and the Post also did similar write-ups. It got me thinking about our own Larsen Family '96 news that's made this past year a memorable one. As I reviewed events, I was surprised that it had all occurred in just one year. Let me highlight a few events:

*The successful completion of Linds' doctorate course work and subsequent move back to San Jose to resume full-time employment with IBM.

*Completion of two more semesters of medical school by Randy and the decision by Shauntel and Randy to move ahead with adoption plans following several difficult months of medical procedures.

*Steve's completion of his Master's degree and securing employment with Assist, and the building of a home in the Tooele area.

*David's graduation with his dual Master's from ASU, accepting employment with Texas Instruments in Dallas, and the move to Plano and then into their own home in October.

*Jonie's successful completion of her Minneapolis training and return to family in Cass Lake. The disappointment of losing her premature baby boy just a few months short of her delivery date.

*Becky's graduation from the "Y" in April and her marriage to Chet in October following a long summer of separation while Chet completed a job commitment in Korea for three months.

*John's completion of three semesters of college and employment with the hospital, following in Steve's footsteps at IHC.

*Mike's completion of his first year at the "Y" and his call to the Mexico, Chihuahua Mission. His farewell, MTC experiences, and weekly letters have chronicled the "two happiest years of his life".

* Paul's graduation as Valedictorian of his class, winning Crawford Cup, and getting the scholarships necessary to go to Ricks College. His summer employment at the Salmon River High Adventure Base.

*Tim's involvement's with school, basketball, piano lessons, and summer employment

*Sara Kay's beginning first grade and her adjustment to a full day of school.

*Daddy's involvement with responsibilities on Wood Badge staff, President of the Young Men's, orchestra, and continuing demands with his employment.

*My new responsibilities as YW President and member of the school board.

*The continued good health and vitality of both sets of grandparents.

Recently, while visiting with Shauntel about Becky's wedding, she mentioned that she had thought on that occasion that we were so fortunate to be together and she wondered what the future held for us. I had similar thoughts that day. It seems especially noteworthy that so many of you were able to successfully complete educational goals and enter the work force with good jobs and bright futures. We truly have much to be grateful for!

It was chaotic but fun to have several families here for Christmas. My favorite time was Thursday night when we got the younger kids down for the night and the we played games until the wee hours of the morning. It was great to get better acquainted with Chet although seeing Becky's side of the family in a competitive situation may not have given him the best opinion of us! We hope that he and Becky have an enjoyable honeymoon at Glacier Park and don't get eaten by any grizzly bears.

Another highlight of the holidays was the opportunity to visit with Mighty Mike the Marvelous Mexico Missionary! When he called Tuesday morning to line up the time for his phone call on Christmas day, I took the call. It took me a second after his initial greeting, "Mom?" to recognize which son it was. When it finally registered, it was great to hear his voice and have a few minutes to say hello. We are immensely proud of his service in the field and relish the chance to share the holidays with him.

I want to mention an experience that Tim had on December 11th on the way to school. He was in the Toyota, signaling to turn left onto the road in front of Shane Jenks' house. Just as he began to turn, a pickup truck tried to pass him on the left side, quickly veered to the left to miss hitting him broadside, caught the Toyota's front bumper and knocked off the grill, and then kept right on going instead of pulling over to assess the damage.

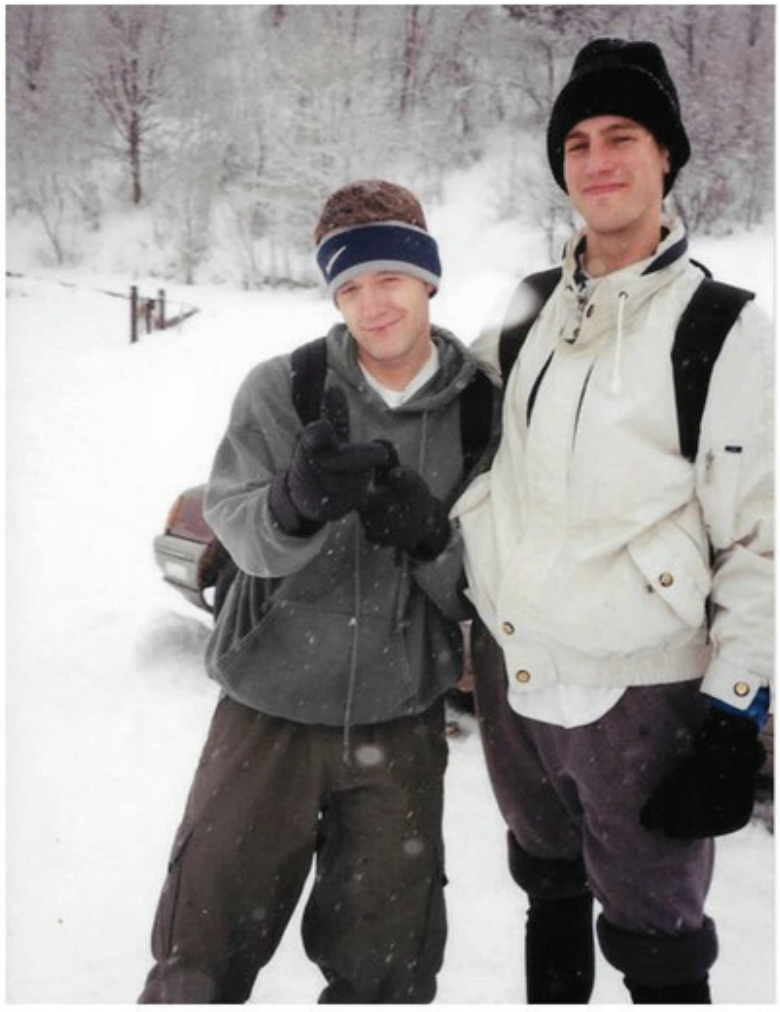
Tim recognized the owner of the pickup and so did several high school students who were enroute to school and witnessed it. He called me and I assured him that he needed to sit tight until the police filed an accident report. I then drove over to Jenk's and awaited the police.

After asking a few routine questions, the officer instructed Tim to drive to the high school and identify the other vehicle. It was nowhere to be found, but since several people had identified the driver, the police questioned him and discovered that he had gone home to exchange cars and then returned to drive by the scene and see if anyone had been hurt. We were grateful that the student had admitted it and that we could resolve the situation. We were especially grateful that Tim was not seriously injured by what could have been a very bad accident.

Paul had his wisdom teeth removed yesterday. He spent several days lying in bed with an ice pack strapped to his face. Tim commented that he looked like Jacob Marley in the "Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens. I wasn't sure Paul appreciated the comparison nor saw the humor in it but it is appropriate for the season.

This Sunday we will be attending a farewell and homecoming for Ryan and Emily. Wow! What a special day for Gary and Linda.

We love you and appreciate your efforts to keep in touch. We pray that you will continue to walk in faith and enjoy the peace the gospel brings. Have a wonderful new year.



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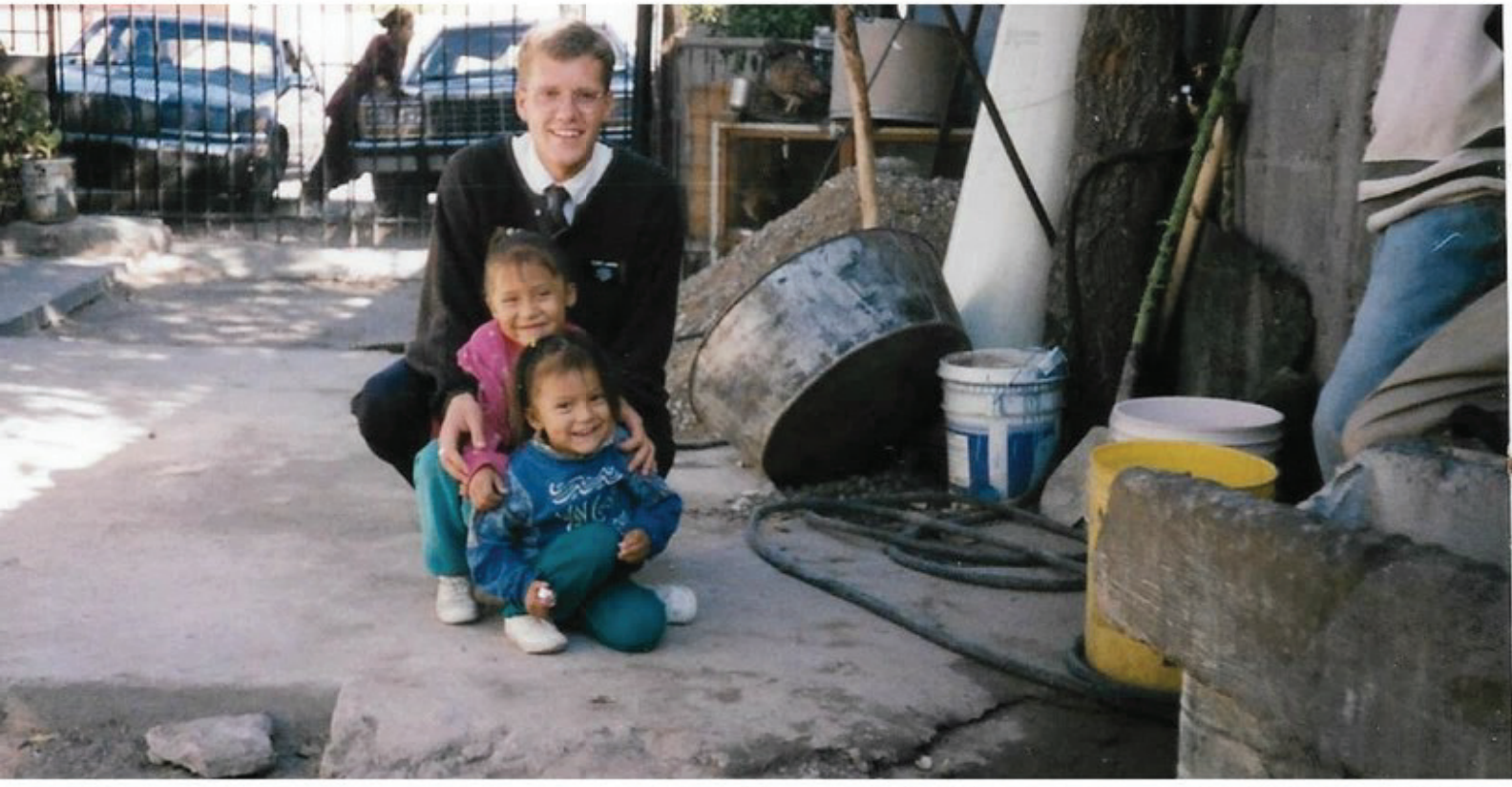

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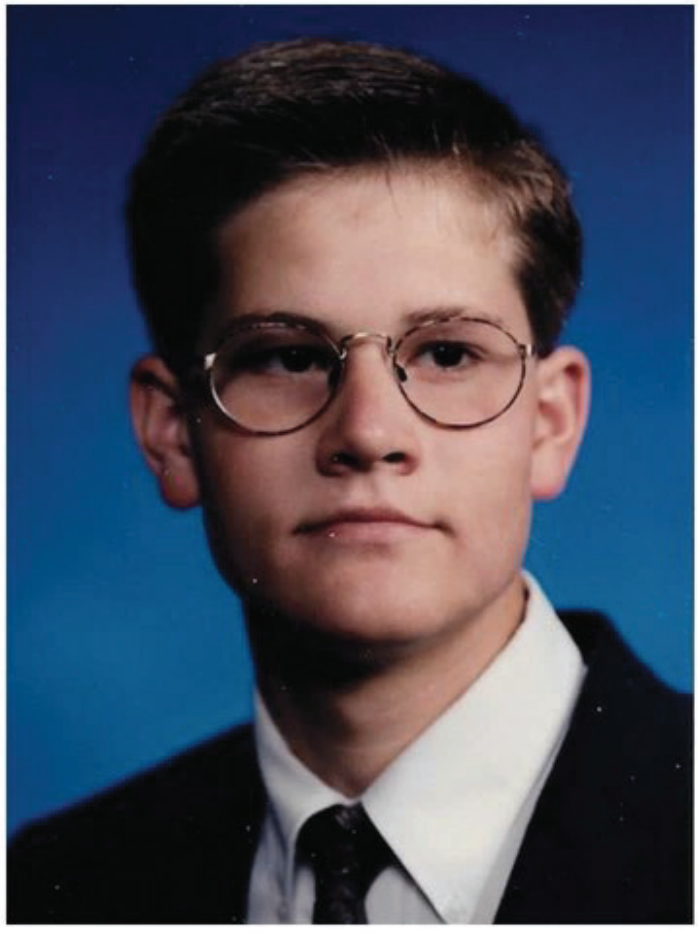

igh school awards

Morning News – Sa

ake River High School Principal Tracy Thompson shakes hands with a few of the honor students who received t
m the high school in honor of their achievements during an assembly Wednesday. Commencement will be held toc
m.

lashes a large grin as he displays his hand-
en won the hand-held computer by merely
ercentile at the Science Day Competition.

Larsen to
chemist

Brian Leavitt
Staff Reporter

Do you know what a "standard deviation" is? Well, it is a type of scoring system where scores range from -1.5 to 1.5. If the score is 0, then that means that half of the questions were answered correctly. If the score is 1, then about 75 percent of the questions were answered correctly, and 1.5 means 99 percent of the answers were correct.

At the Science Day Competition in Boise on

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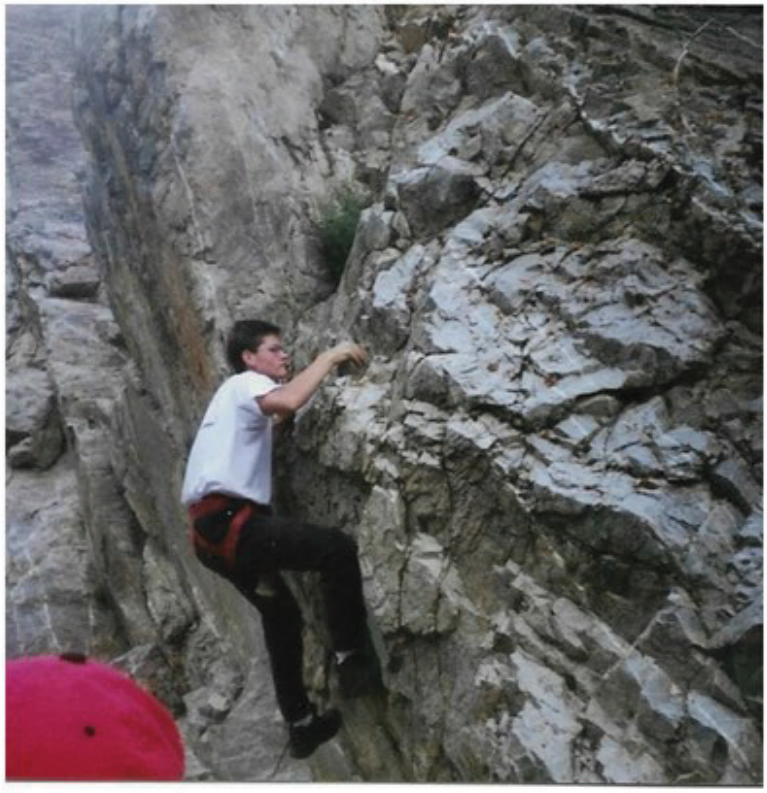

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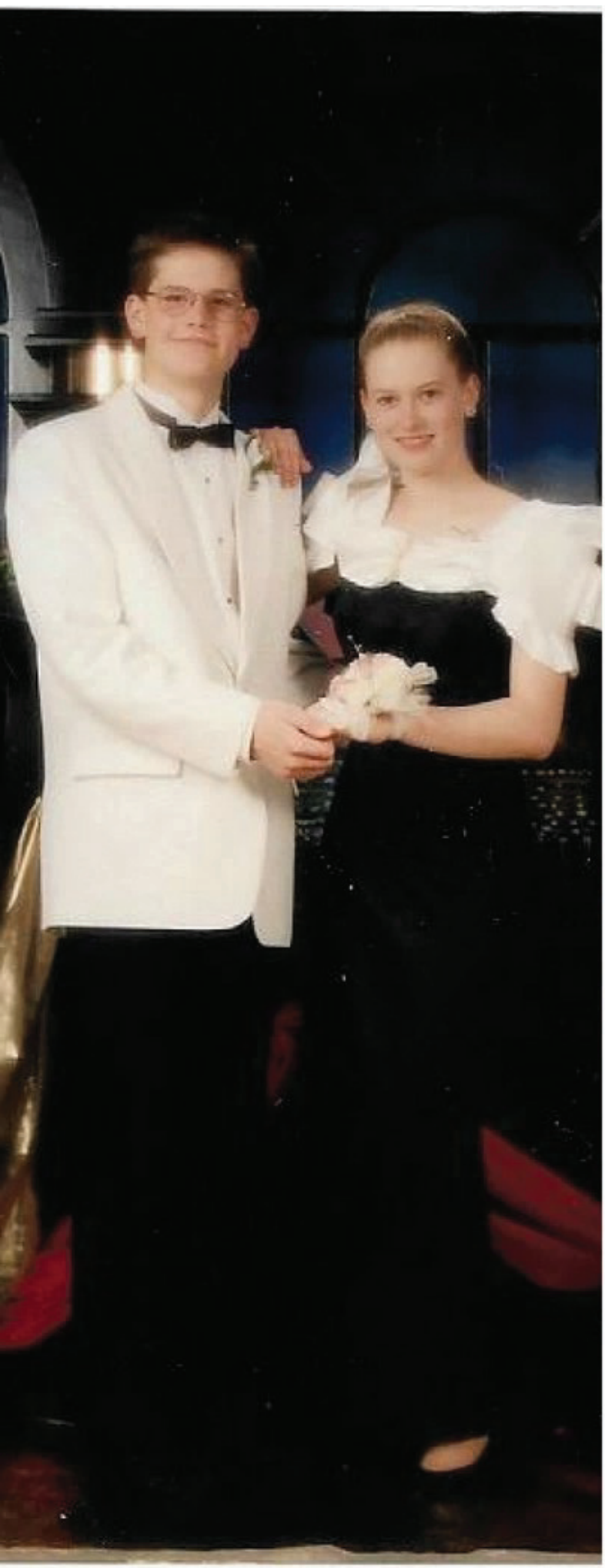
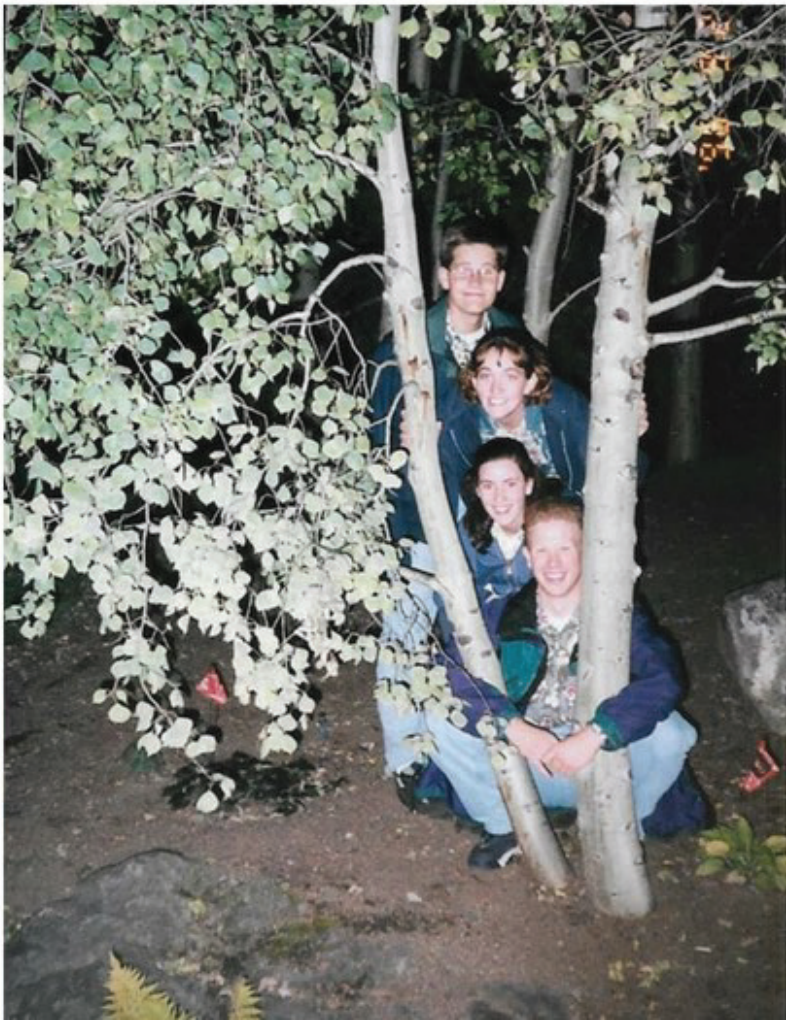
Coke



LESS!
EVERY DAY



3 15 '97

BINGHAM MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
EMERGENCY ENTRANCE
& VISITOR PARKING

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San Francisco

Shuttle
Flight
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San Francisco

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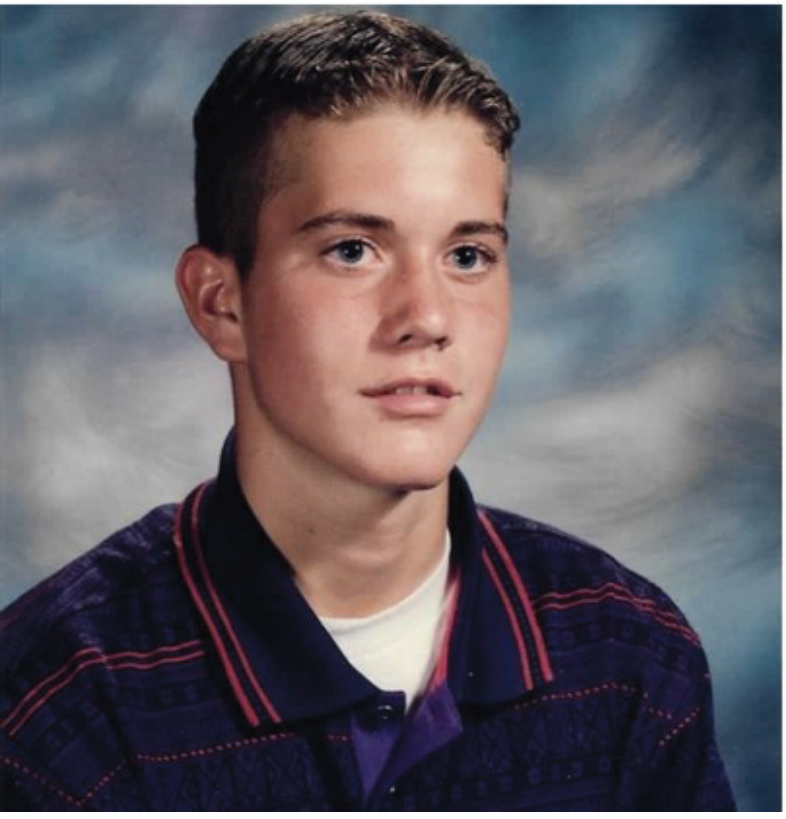

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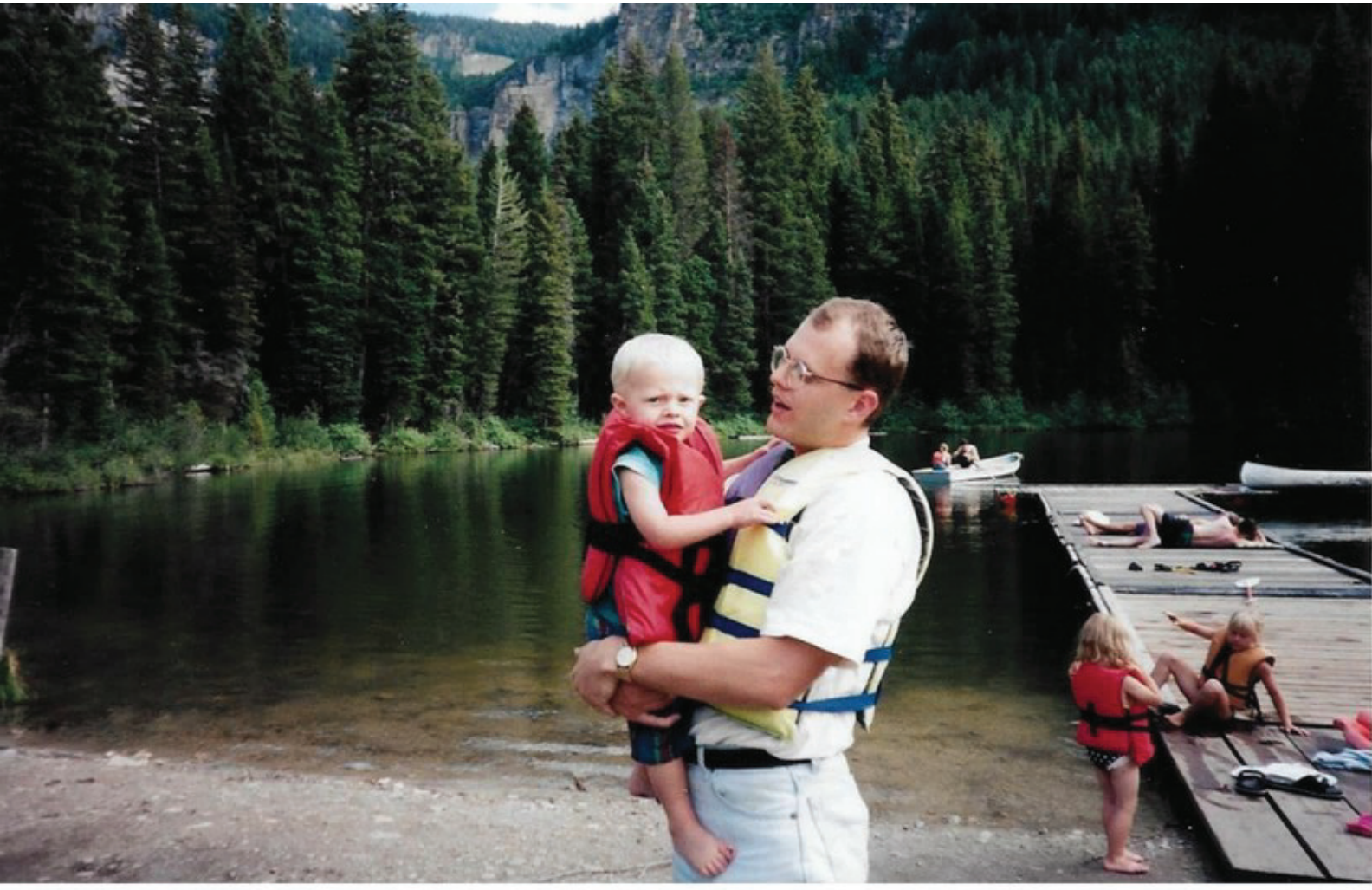

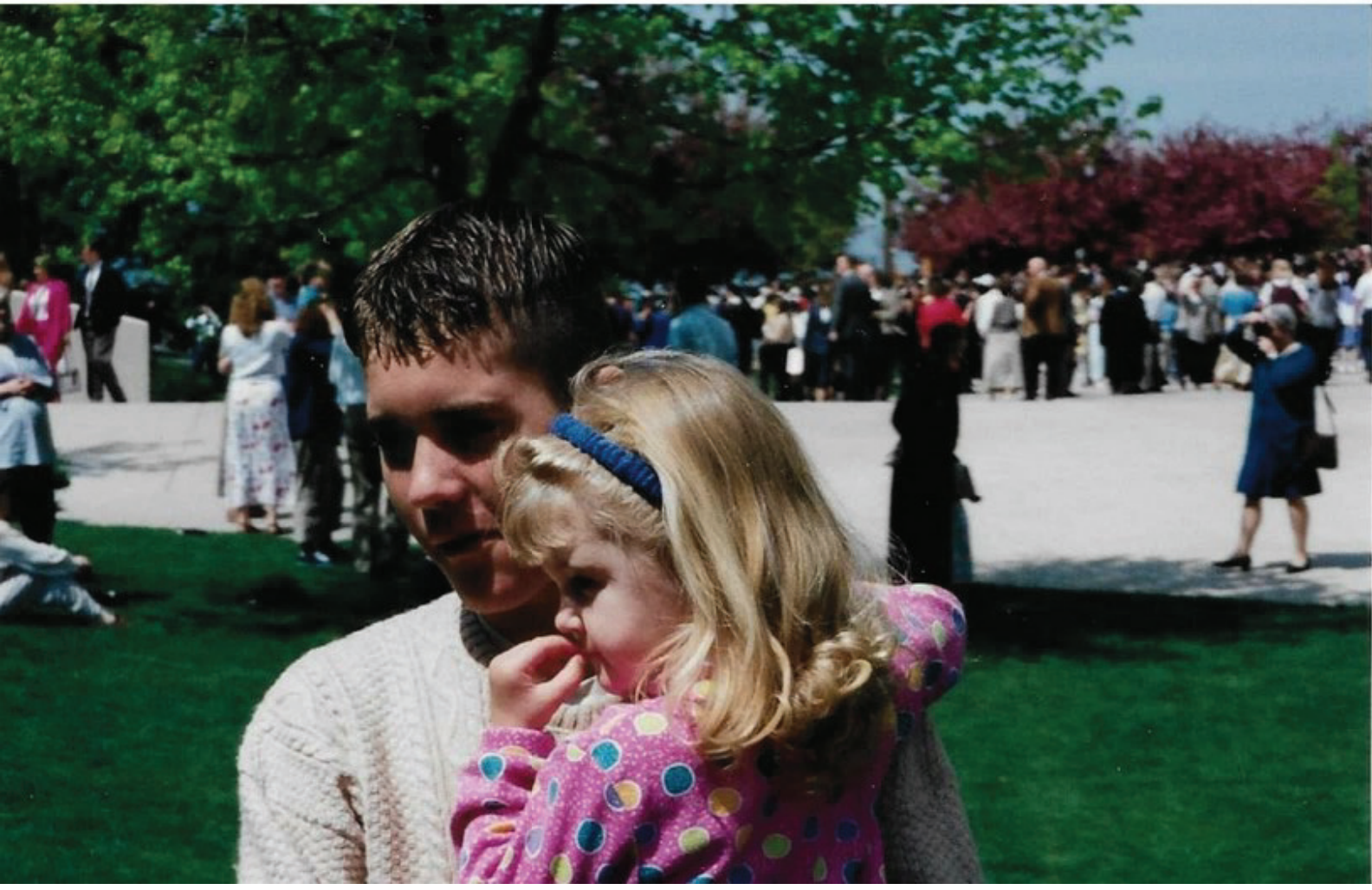

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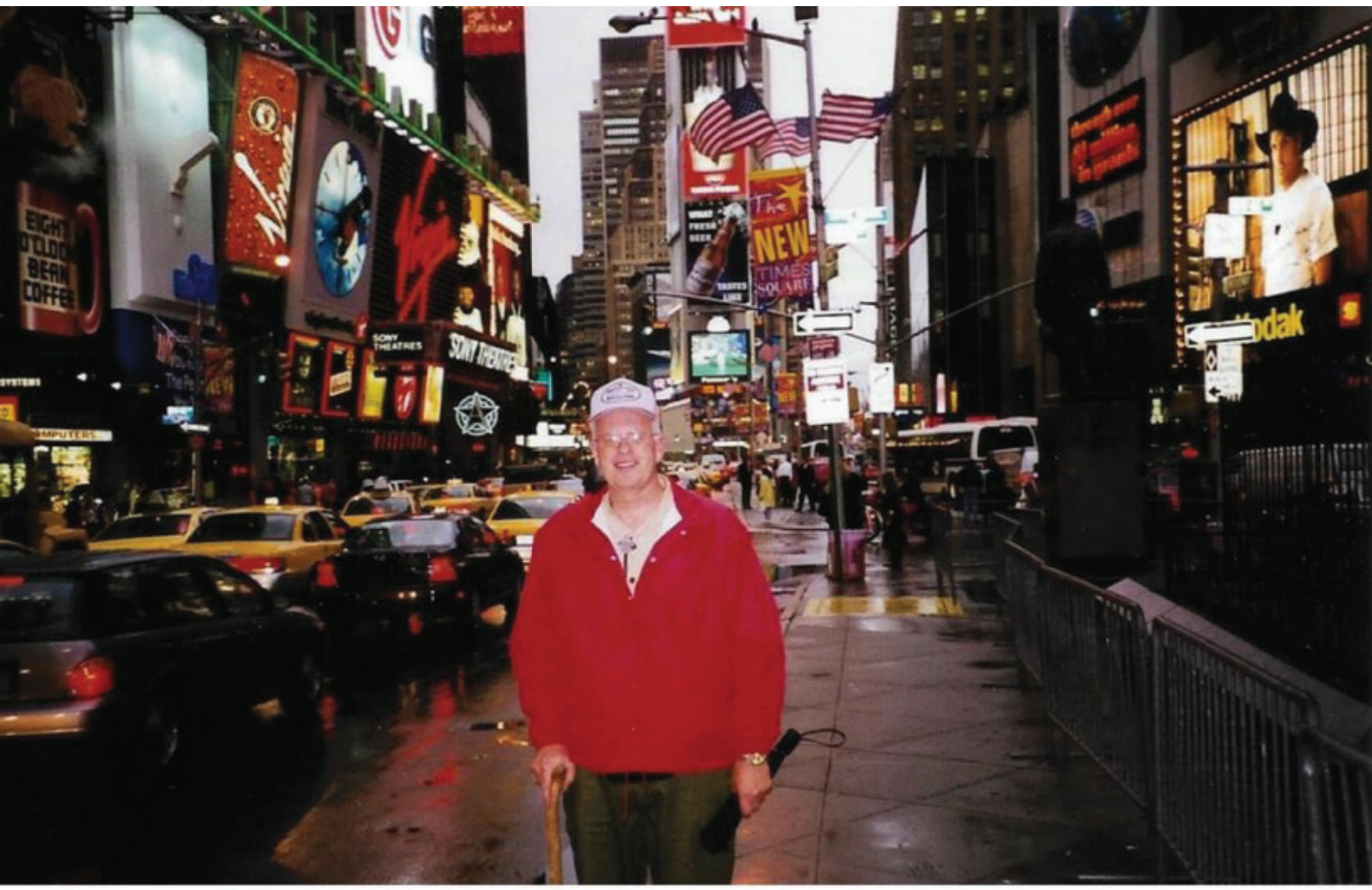
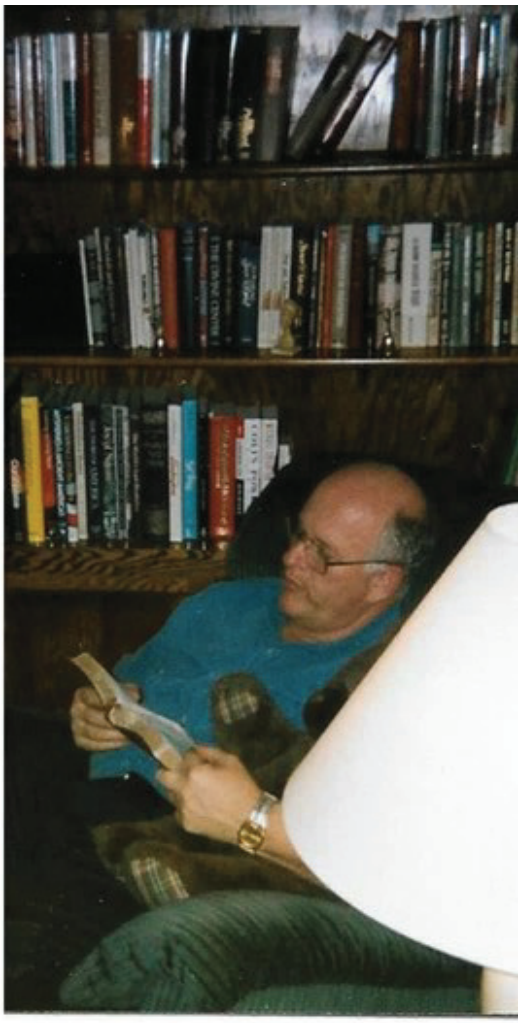
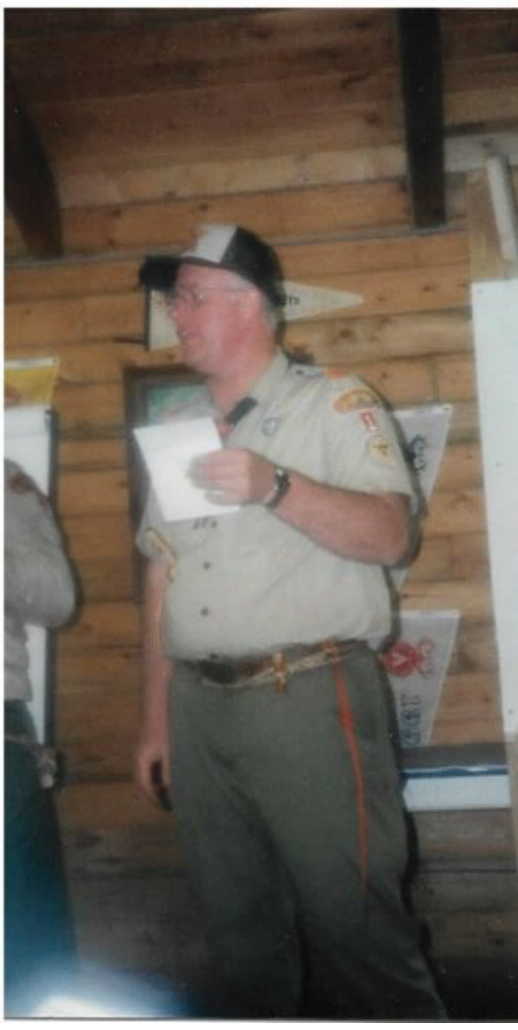


Wood Badge WV2-107-1-97

Wood Badge WV2-107-1-97





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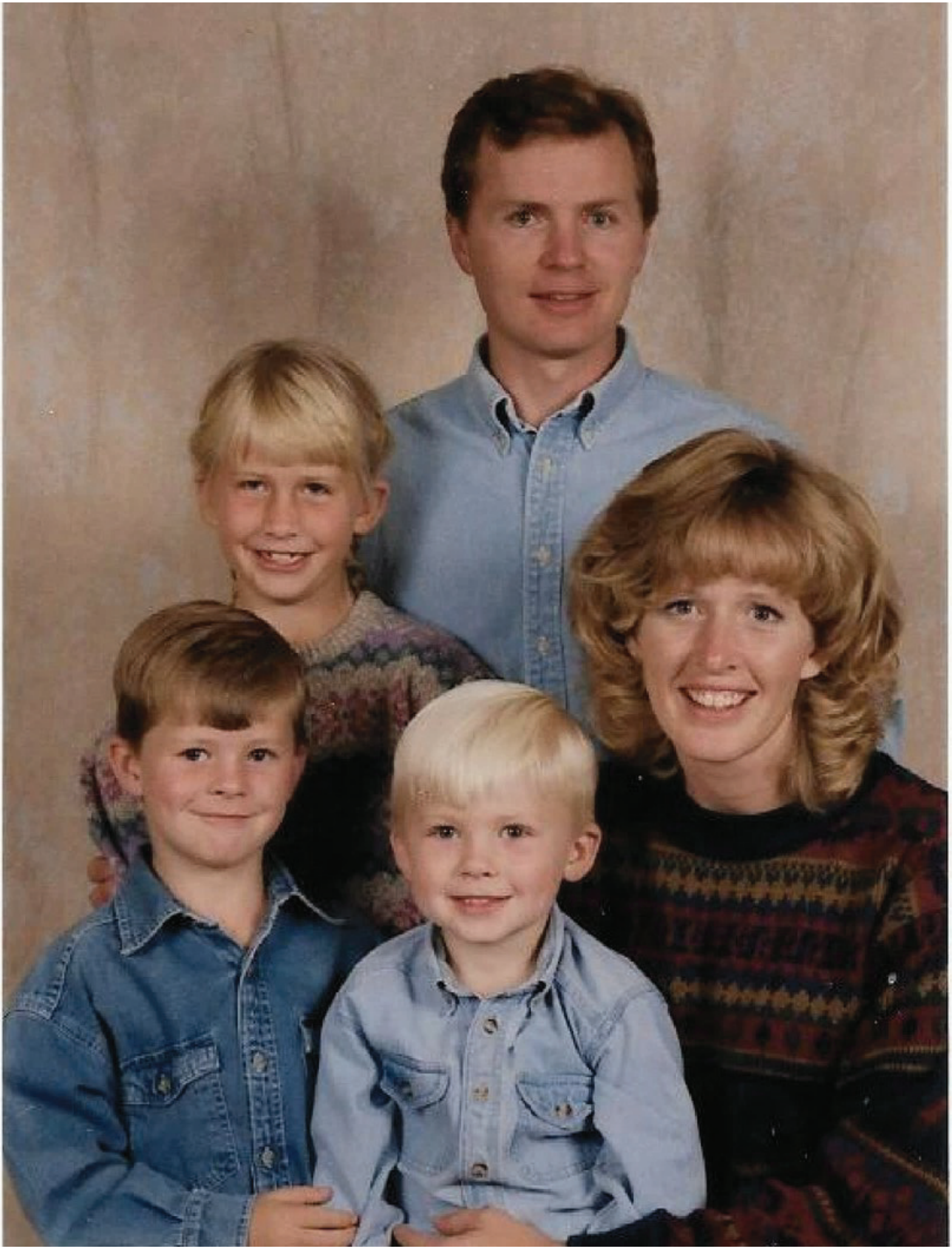
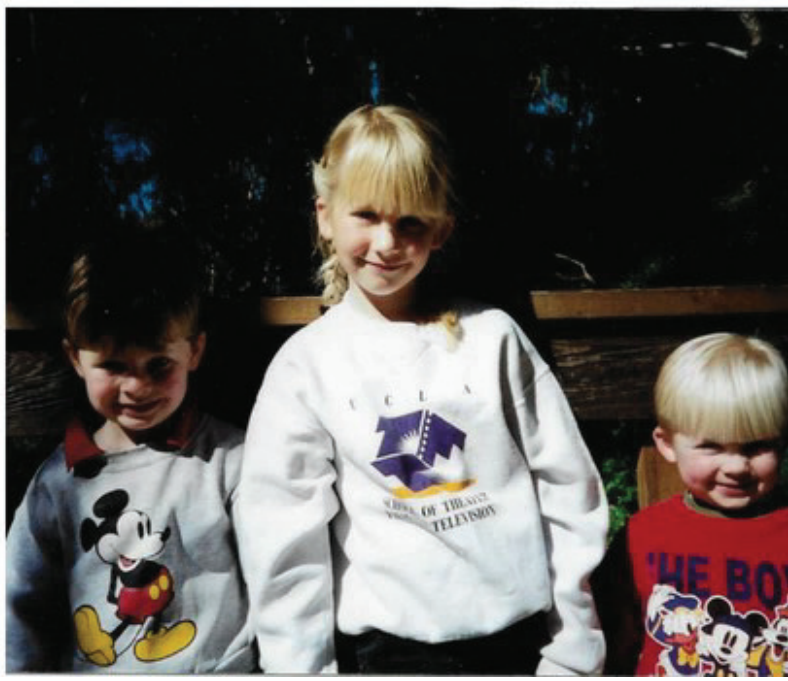
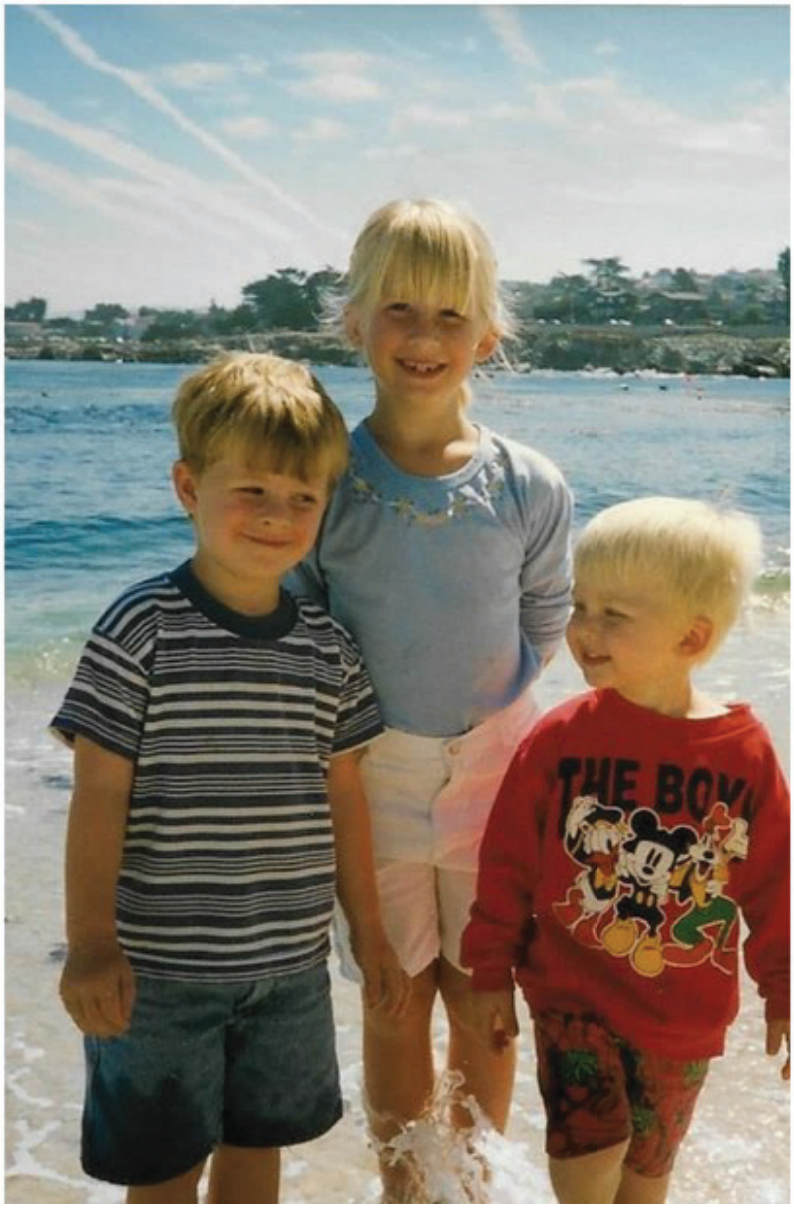
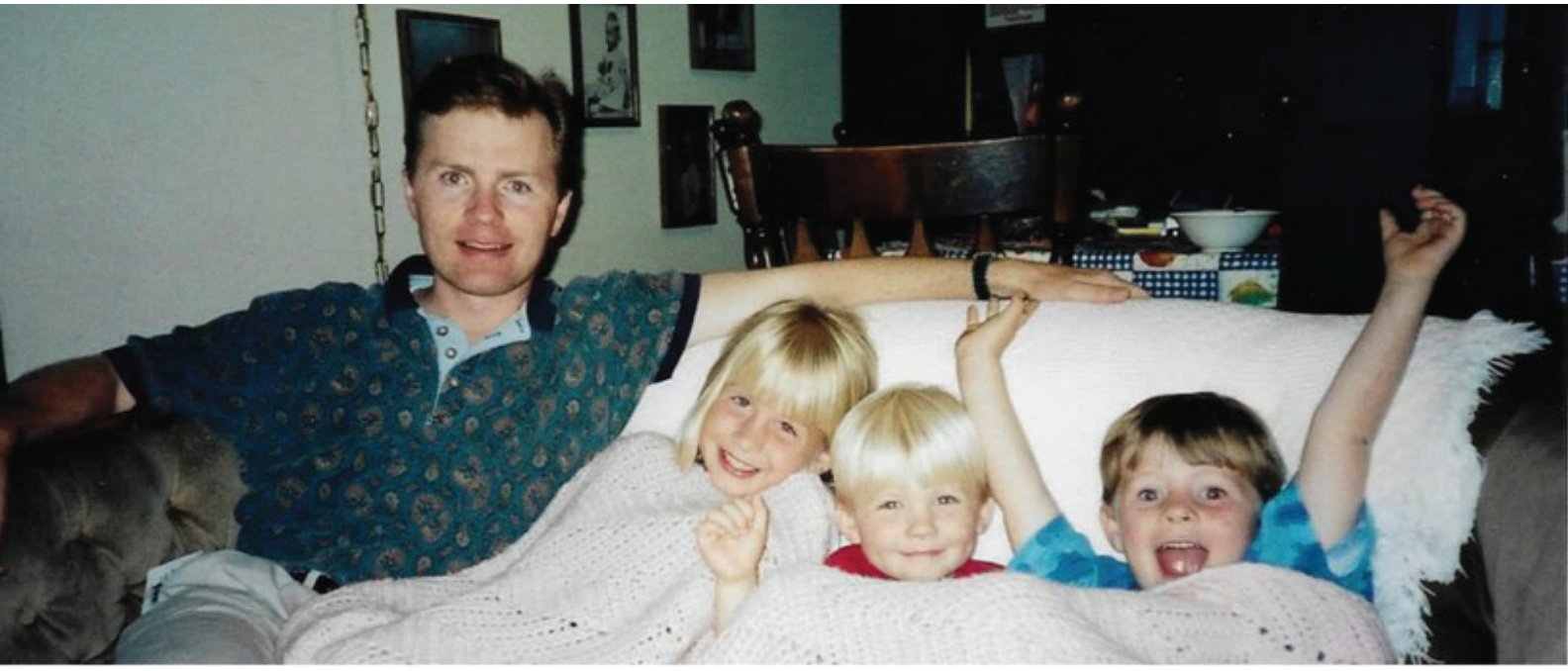
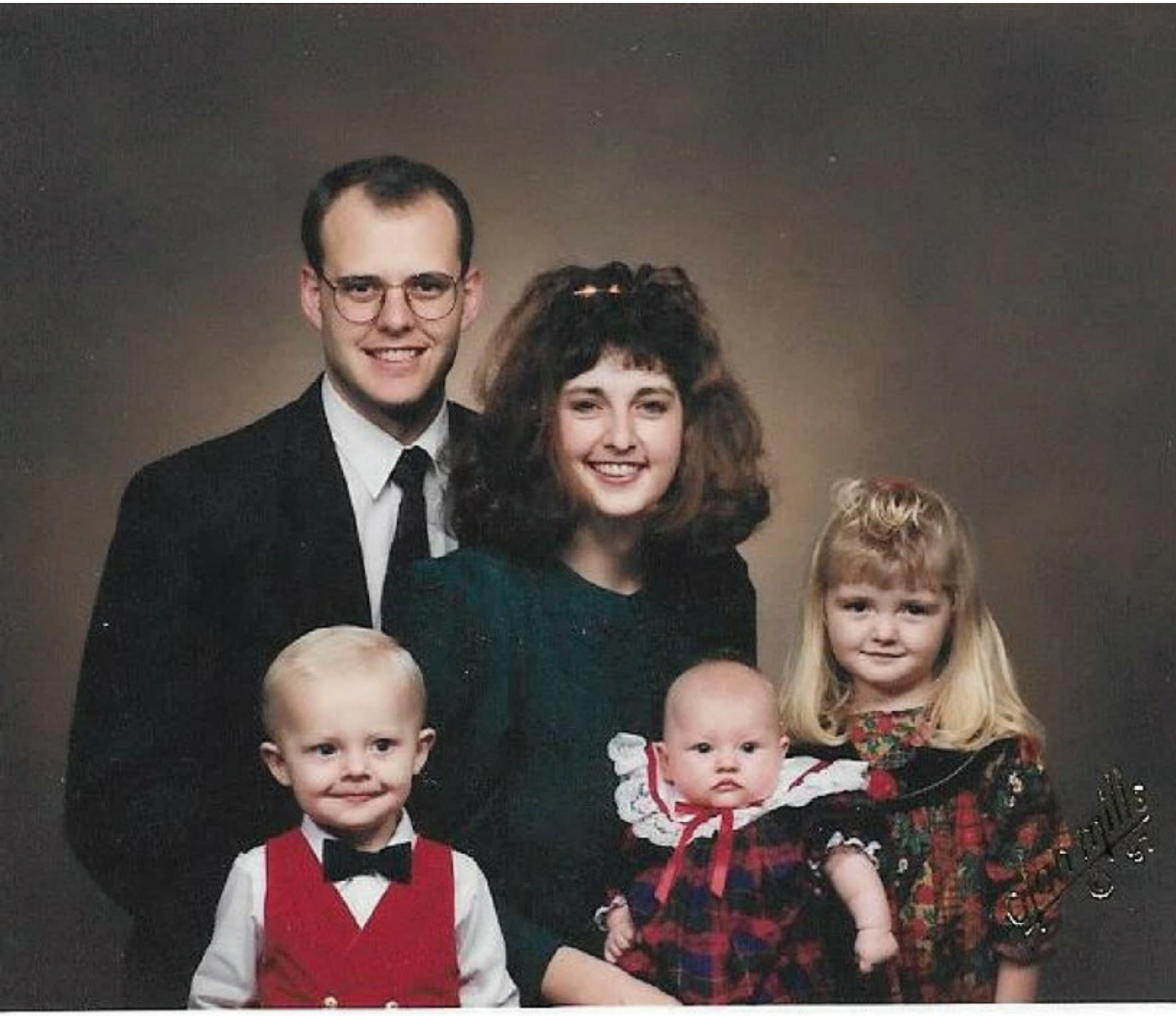


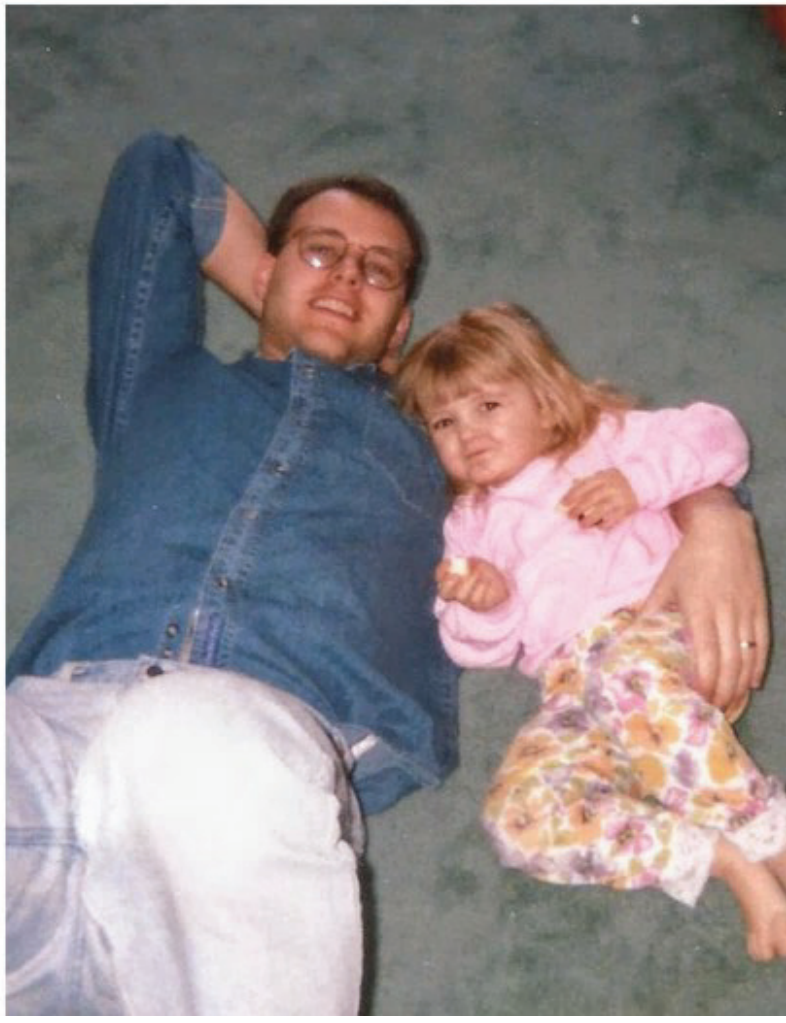

UCLA
SCHOOL OF THEATER
FILM AND TELEVISION

1996
PUMPKIN KING









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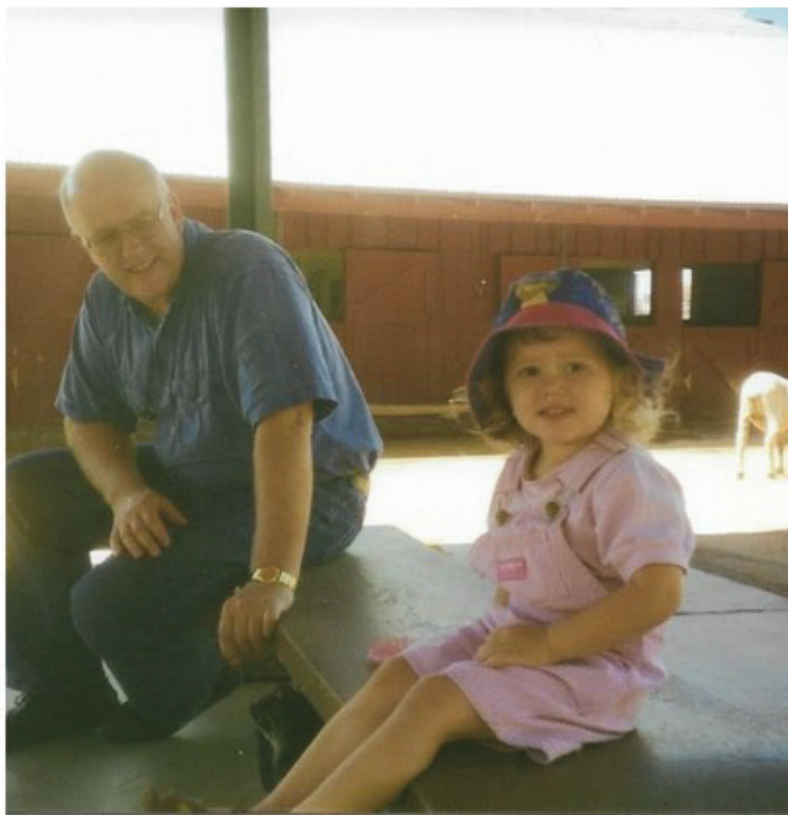

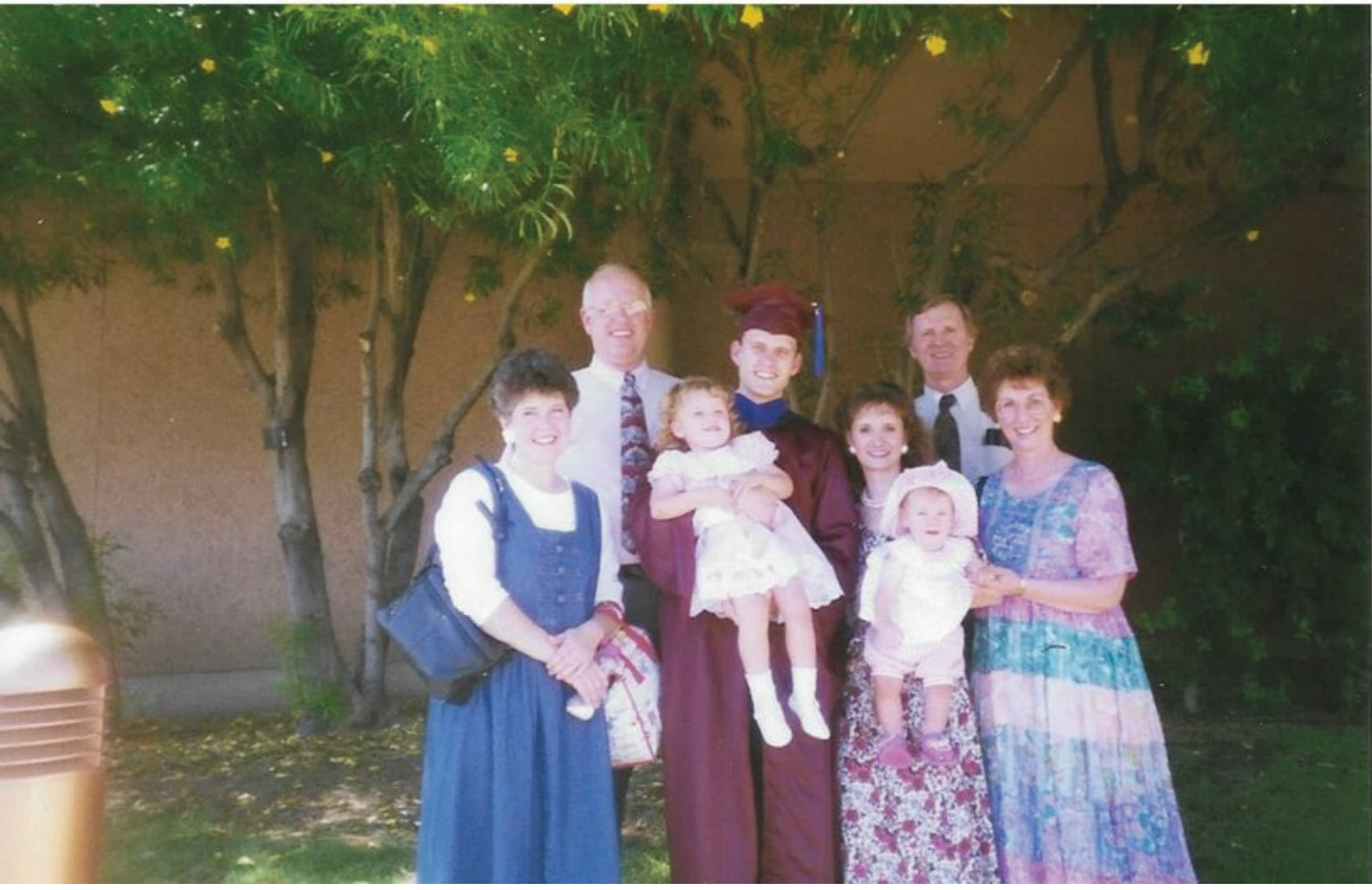

FRAGILE
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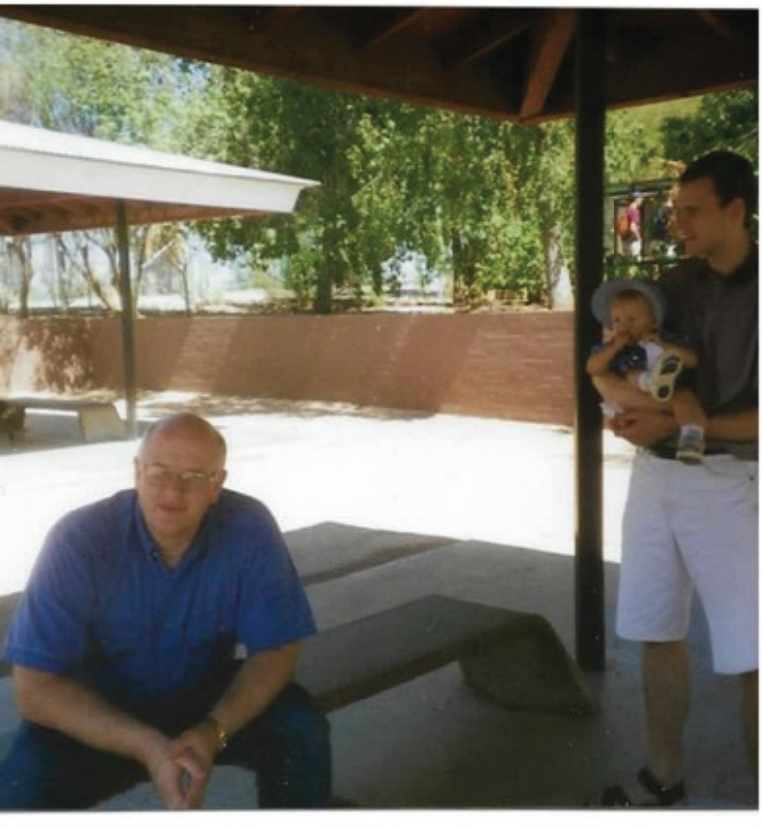
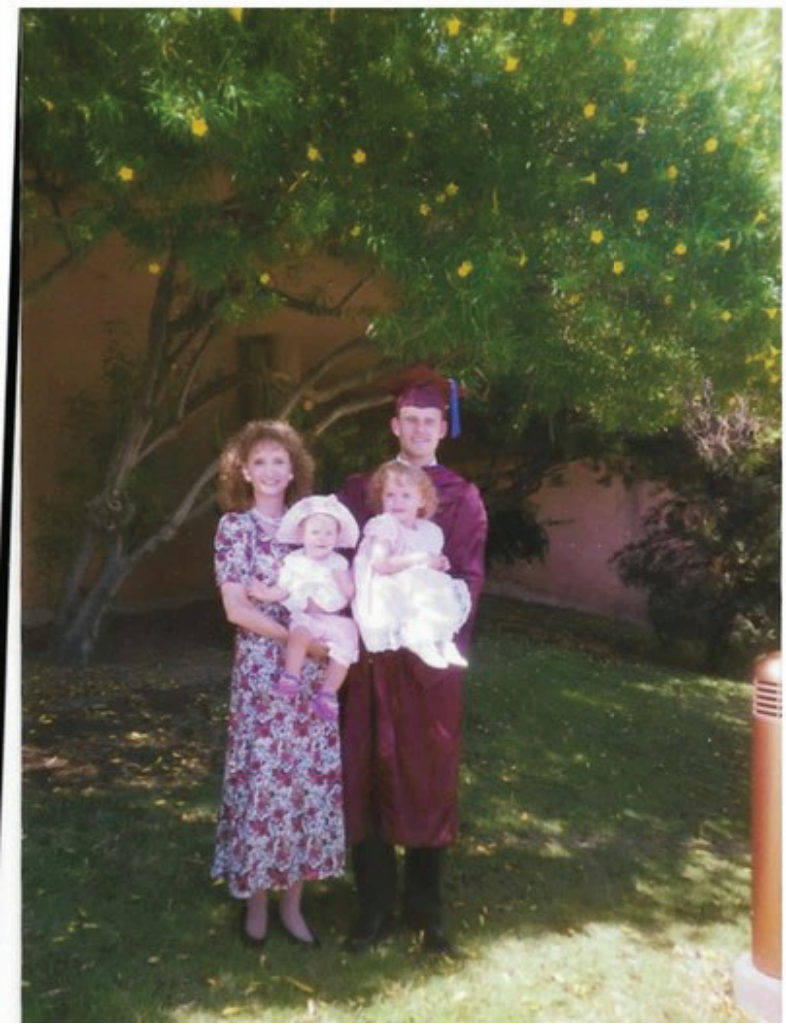
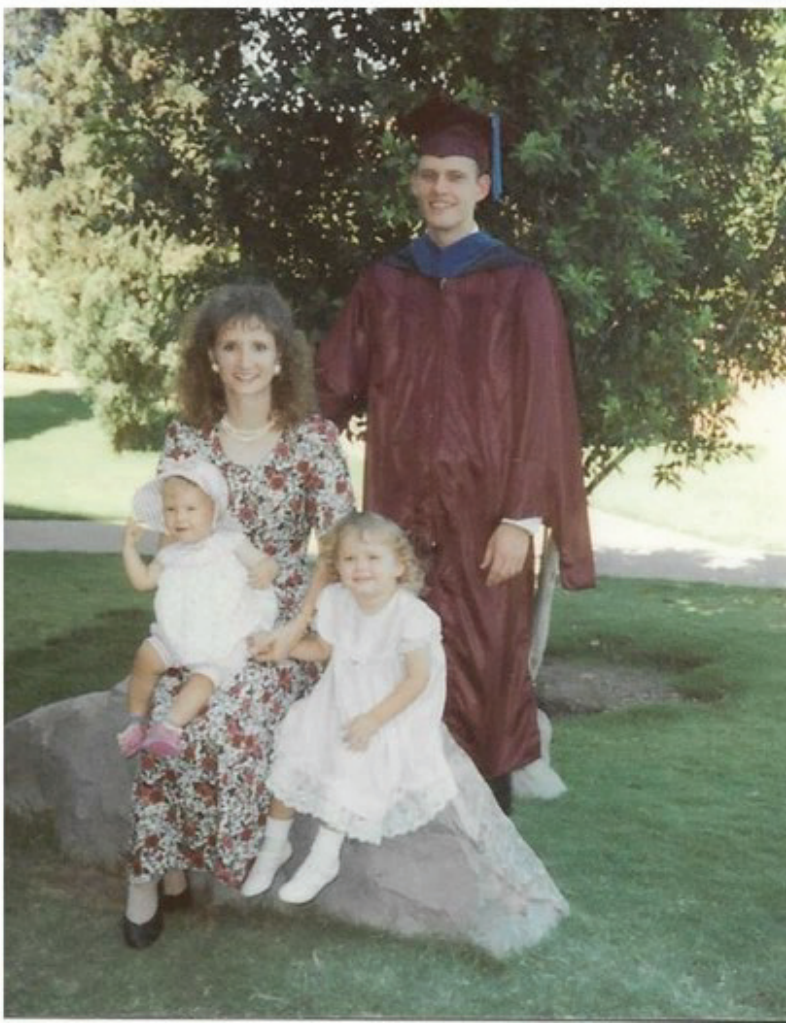
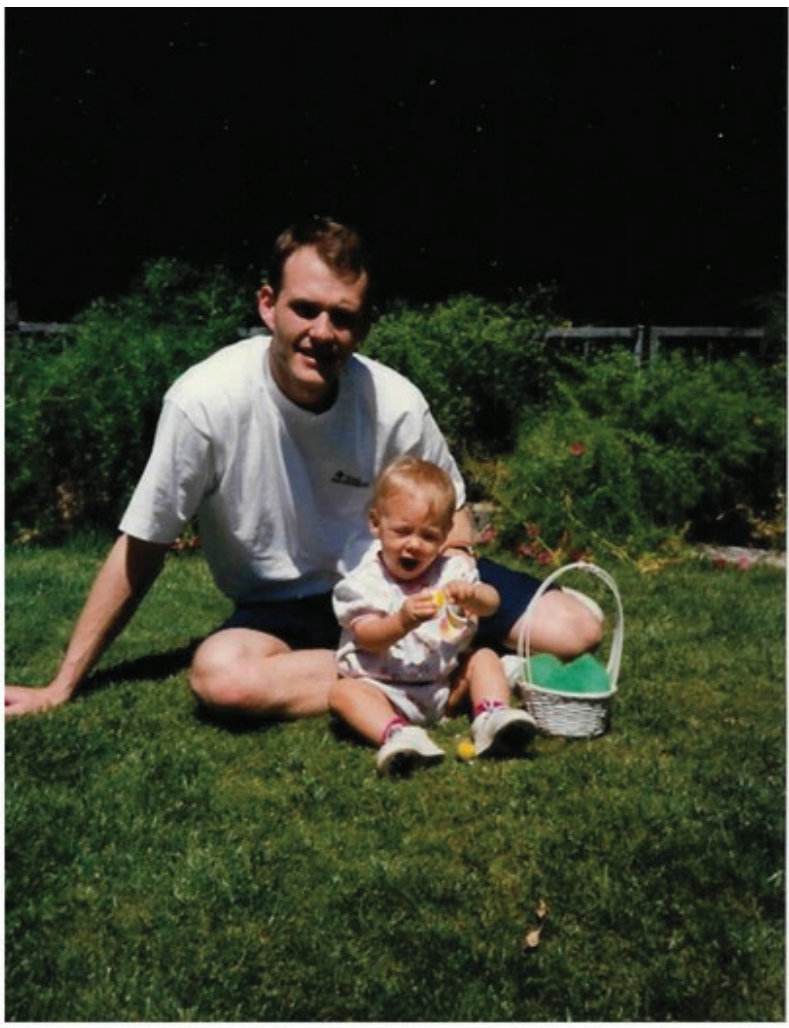


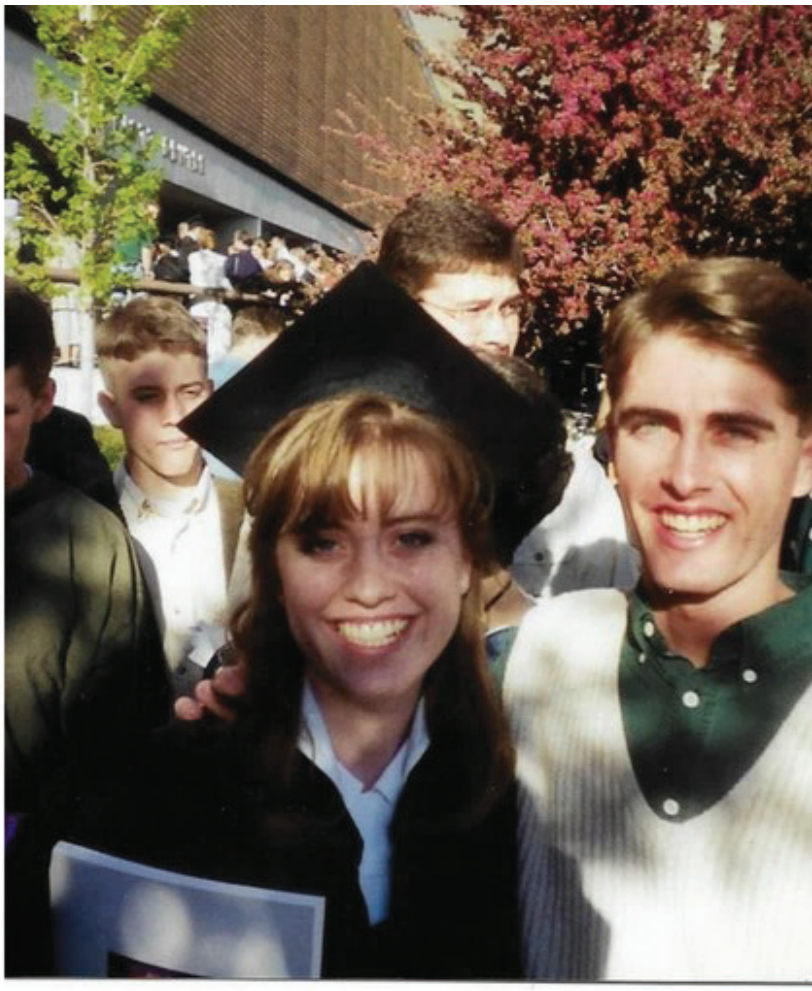


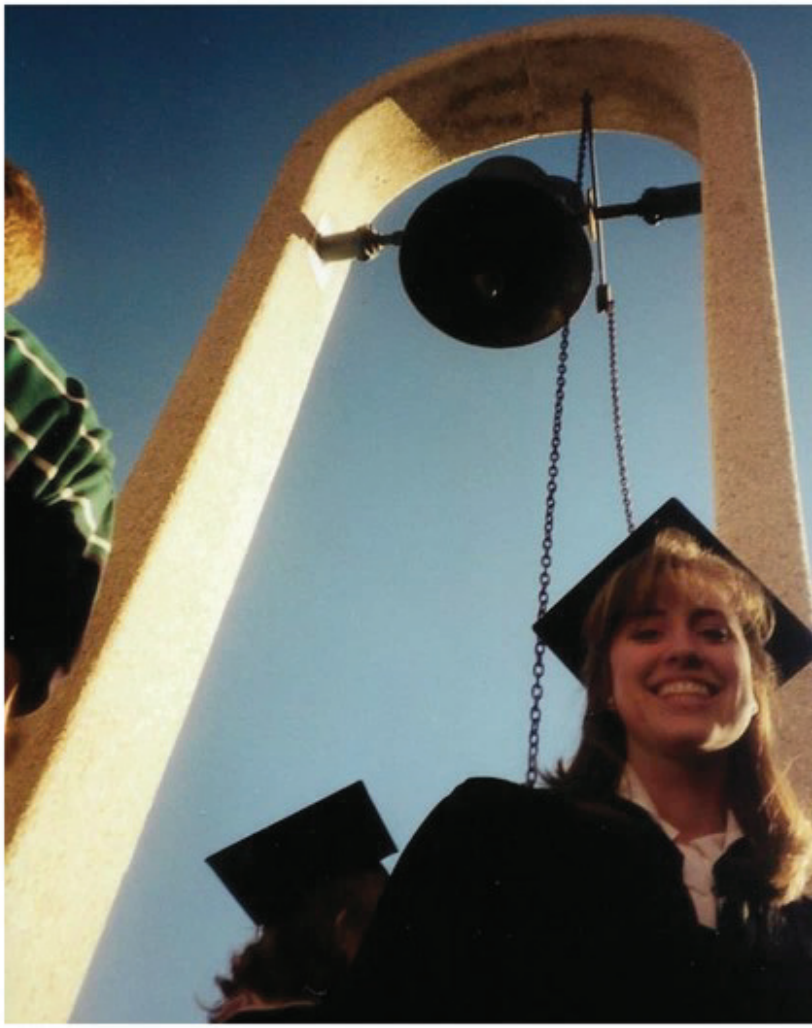


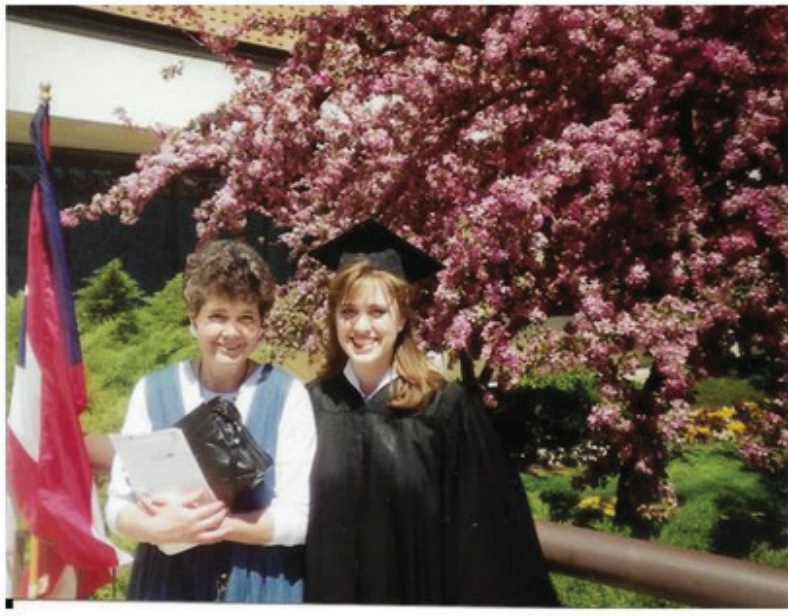
5 8'96

Welcome to Texas
Drive Friendly - The Texas Way

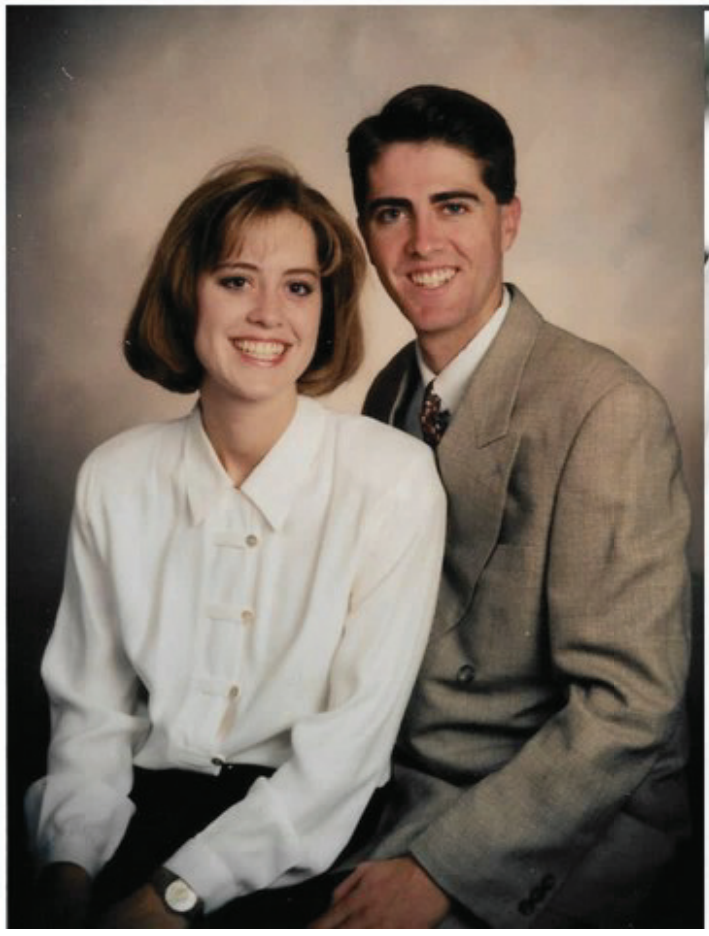


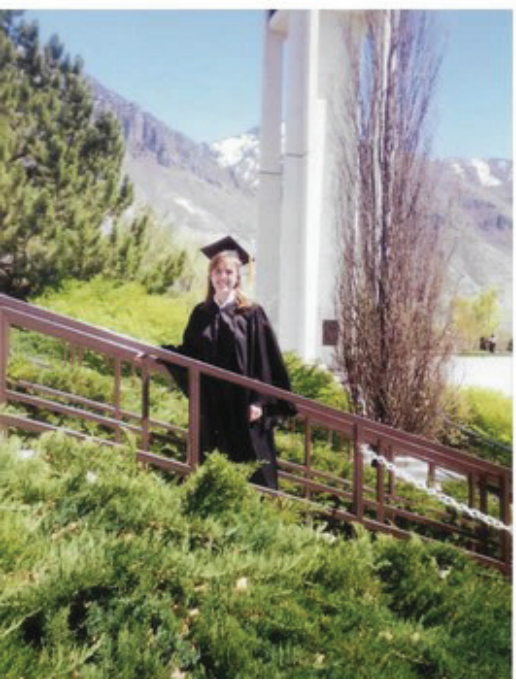






BRIDE'S MOTHER





January 6, 1997

[Mom] Paul and I left early this morning for Pocatello and his final check-up on his wisdom teeth. He spent most of last week recovering and didn't feel very good until Saturday. I was grateful that we had scheduled him as early in the holiday as we did so that he didn't have to return to Rexburg feeling sickly. He was anxious to get back to school and finish up his year. He applied for a summer job at a truss shop here in Blackfoot and things sounded optimistic about that. He is determined to get a job that pays better than Kesler's so that he can put as much away for his mission as possible.

Yesterday was a red-letter day for Gary and Linda as they welcomed home Emily and said good-bye to Ryan. It was fun to be together as family and very touching to hear Emily's report. She was a wonderful missionary!

We arrived at the West Stake Center about 12:50 and were seated when Grandpa and Grandma Larsen joined us. Grandpa looked absolutely terrible. Saturday while walking, he stepped into a slight depression in the roadway and fell forward. He fell onto his face, shattered his glasses and badly cut up the right side of his face. He had cuts that had to be stitched closed and the doctor dug out gravel from his chin. By Sunday morning when we saw him, his eye was blackened, scraped, and swollen shut, and the whole side of his face looked raw. I had visited with him on the phone Friday and everything was fine and so to see him so beat up Sunday came as a real shock! Thank goodness AlvaLu was with him when it happened.

Over the holiday I visited with some of you children about holding the Stephen A. Larsen family reunion at Treasure Mountain Scout Camp. We have permission to use the camp facilities including a lodge with a kitchen, bathrooms, loft, and tables and chairs as well as several small cabins with beds. There would be canoes and swimming in the small camp lake, as well as hiking, crafts, etc. The week that it is available is the week of August 11th-15th. We recognize that there would be many who could not come but we feel like we want to establish this and hold it annually for those who can. We appreciate comments.

Several weeks ago we received a letter from Gary and Linda who are in charge of the Larsen reunion this summer. They said the reunion will be held at Sportsman's Park by Aberdeen again this year. The dates for that will be July 9-11 and will include a family program, lots of good food, and boating with water skiing. Each family will bring their own tents and the meals will be shared. More on that later.

I am not aware of a Richards' reunion this summer with the uncertainty of Nate, Don, and Grandpa and Grandma Richards' situation. Grandpa Arch's brother-in-law, Glen McMillan, has cancer and has been very sick and Grandpa promised his sister, Ruby, that when Glen dies, he and Grandma would fly to Salt Lake for the funeral. They will spend some time with some of us then.

[Dad] I was able to visit with Dad this evening and he is feeling much better. He said that if he didn't have to look in the mirror, he wouldn't know anything was wrong. He will get the stitches out on Thursday.

It was a treat to join Gary and Linda and their family on Sunday. I was grateful that much of the family was there. Listening to Emily, I was amazed how a mission converts and transforms people. I believe we would have the missionary program, just for the influence it has in the lives of missionaries even if we didn't get any converts.

It is a little bit of a letdown to get back into the flow of work, piano lessons, school, etc. after the infusion of family and pace during the holidays. I was able to get another Trails put together, published, and distributed last week thanks to the help of family and neighbor kids. When it comes to projects like that I am always indebted to your mother and her recruiting and organizing abilities.

With Paul leaving yesterday, we are down to the four of us at home again. It is a challenge to have an FHE that is exciting and interesting for a six-year-old, a fifteen-year-old and a couple of fifty-year-old's. We were grateful to have the additional time with Paul. He is a fine young man with high standards. I'm proud of him and his accomplishments and the maturity level as I watch him prepare for a mission. He has stoically endured the discomfort of wisdom teeth removal. I was grateful to see him almost back to normal by the time he left yesterday to go back to Rexburg.

My thoughts turned to Mike during this holiday season. I remember my first Christmas in England. I was working in Hereford and the members were really good to us. I remember the excitement of Christmas packages and tapes from home, watching the mail each day for letters and cards, and the smell of the Bullmer's Cider Works across the street from our flat.

I remember cleaning up the upstairs hall from the drinking parties held there so we could have our branch meetings on Sunday. We tried to work doubly hard to dedicate our proselyting work to the Savior and tried to have baptisms during Christmas time. I can also remember having one of our favorite investigators pack us in because his roots, habits, and friends as a Scotsman, were too hard to leave behind. The New Year drinking and celebrations helped him make that decision.

January 13, 1997

[Mom] Yesterday the topic for our sacrament meeting was the theme for the sesquicentennial, "Faith in Every Footstep." Both of the speakers were able to relate touching instances from their own ancestors lives of heroic deeds done during the pioneer trek. I'm amazed that so many of us in the church today are a product of those original pioneer families and how much we are indebted to them. I am looking forward to the upcoming year with all its festivities and remembrances.

Our stake is having a YW\Aaronic Priesthood pioneer trek to commemorate the event. It will be a three-day, push handcarts (rented from a company in Salt Lake), eat beans, wear pioneer dress, type of event. I am hoping to get to go with the youth but it has me concerned about being physically fit enough. I am going to aerobics three times a week to build my stamina. We had a stake meeting last week where we talked over several aspects of the trek. There is a syllabus that gives instructions for preparations. The dates are August 14-16. Since this is the week of our family reunion at Treasure Mountain, we will need to do some juggling.

The past few days have been really cold. Yesterday morning the temperature with wind chill was -31. Paul said the expected low last night in Rexburg was -60! I hate this kind of weather as it puts a damper on everything. John said that they had received 2 feet of snow in Provo and that many of the wards had canceled meetings for the day. It has seemed like a pretty severe winter already and probably more to come. It makes me appreciate our warm home!

Saturday Daddy replaced the water heater in the furnace room and we gave the room a thorough cleaning while we were at it. There are so many projects that need

attention in the basement but time and money are always limiting factors.

I have been wanting to sell the old piano to make room for a desk for me in the computer room. I had such an emotional time when we got rid of our original washing machine that I wasn't sure I could muster up the courage to sell the piano. Well, I listed it in the want ads and last Friday I got a call on it. The person calling asked about the details and then she stopped mid-sentence and asked my name. When I told her, she exclaimed, "Sister Larsen, this is Robyn Young! Remember me?"

Of course I did since she was one of the youth in the Moreland Second Ward when Daddy was bishop. Well, to make a long story short, she is now married and has young children who are ready to start taking piano lessons. They couldn't afford much but they were determined to find a piano.

Within a couple hours she came and saw the piano and paid me for it. She was totally delighted and so was I. It is not going to be so hard to part with this important member of our family now that I know it will have a good home.

Many of you will remember how we came to purchase the piano. We were living on the desert and Steve and David had just started to take lessons from Enid Williams. Steph and Shaunie were already taking lessons and it was quite a challenge to get four practiced before the school bus came each morning.

One day the thought came to me that what we really needed was a second piano. I dismissed it since it seemed like such a luxury for a young family on a limited budget. The problem with practicing time continued and our hectic life-style made it nearly impossible to depend on time after school as well as before school for practicing. I thought about praying about a second piano but it seemed like such a lot to ask the Lord.

One day I got a phone call from my friend and neighbor, Diane Belnap. Her husband Jerry worked for Daddy as a farmhand and they were in the process of buying a new home. They were ready to close on the loan, but they were short the money they needed. She called to see if we would like to buy their old piano for $200.

I couldn't believe it! I had hardly dared hope for such a miracle and it had happened! A few hours and $200 dollars later, we moved it into our master bedroom and it has been a part of our family ever since. It has been in the master bedroom, the back bedroom, the dining room, Dad's office, at the Hanni's for a couple of years, and now in the computer room. It came with the arms partially sawed off and we cut wedges off the legs to make it fit into the doorways. Three keys don't play and it has never been tuned in the 17 years we've had it but never-the-less it has done the job and been a great blessing to our family.

I guess the moral of this story is that the Lord is mindful of our needs and our righteous desires and he will provide those things that are needful for us if we will move ahead in faith.

I've learned over the years that I have a difficult time with change. I remember when Tim was about four years old I was visiting with my dad about how my life was changing and he counseled me to accept change and look for the good in the new situation. I feel like I am going through that same thing again now with SaraKay in school and so few left at home. Part of me is grateful to be putting the hectic life-style aside and having a little more discretionary time but part of me is hanging on to the past and the joy of seeing our family mature. Who would have guessed that a 51-year-old could be having growing pains!

[Dad] I know a fifty-three year old that is having growing pains! But I'm grateful for the continual growth that experiences put us through. With faith and good cheer we can keep moving ahead.

I appreciate the tribute to the old upright that Sue shared with you. It is easier to see it go when you know the good home it will have.

The book about Gordon B. Hinckley, "Go Forward With Faith," by Sheri L. Dew is certainly fascinating. I couldn't even read the preface without crying. But there was a statement of President Hinckley's that I read tonight that I wanted to share with you. He said,

"Never forget that you were chosen and brought to earth to live as a child of God for something of importance in his grand scheme. He expects marvelous things of you. He expects you to keep your lives clean from the sins of the world. You are the line through which will pass the qualities of your forebears to the posterity who will come after you. Did you ever see a chain with a weak link? Don't you become that weak link."

What a beautiful statement! I am the line through which will pass the qualities of my forebears to the posterity who will come after me. The same goes for you! What great and desirable qualities are evidenced in the lives of our forebears! Oh, that we can be effective conduits for passing those qualities on and that we can live to see them in the lives of our posterity.

In another talk he identified four simple principles parents might consider in rearing their children: to love them, to teach them, to respect them, and to pray with and for them. How truly simple and yet profound are those simple principles in raising a righteous posterity.

I hope that each of you senses how those principles have played a crucial role in our relationships with you. And further, that they will be a guide in developing your parenting skills. Another thing that has really come home to me is how much each of those principles are deepened with time. My love and respect for you grows continually. I don't know how much we continue to teach you, but I know that our prayers for each of you become more intense as your responsibilities grow.

Tonight for home evening we discussed the First Vision and our Sunday School lessons yesterday. It was refreshing to bear witness again of my conviction that Joseph Smith is indeed a prophet and recount the time in my life when I first received that witness. It is true!!! Love, DAD

January 20, 1997

[Mom] Paul has been home with us this past weekend and we have enjoyed his visit. One of his good friends, B.J. Driscoll, had his mission farewell Sunday and Paul sang with a quartet on the program. Saturday he and Merritt took dates and went skiing for the evening. Today they are at Cami Hansen's house for a brunch with all their old high school friends and then they will head back to Ricks this afternoon. Three of his friends are ready to submit their mission papers and will be leaving when the semester is over. Time marches on!

I'm looking forward to having some time with Paul this summer before he leaves on his mission. It was hard to send Mike off in May when he had been gone the previous nine months to school and we were already missing him.

Speaking of Mike; he got the transfer and is now a senior companion with an American missionary. Hopefully they will work well together. I know that many of you are writing to him and it has been a real source of strength and comfort as well as providing him some good advice on

handling his problems. When he described his living quarters I couldn't help thinking how much he is going to appreciate life in the USA when he returns. We live with so much abundance!

Tim had a busy and rewarding week. Tuesday his team played American Falls. It was a very physical game and about half of their team were juniors, one being 6'6". I was able to see the first three quarters but then left because of a school board meeting. Later, upon returning home, I learned that Tim scored nine points in the last quarter and they pulled off a win. It was Tim's best game of the season!

Saturday he and Shane competed as a team in the McDonald's "Sure Shot" competition in Blackfoot and came away with first place trophies! They advance to Rupert and if they win there, they will shoot at halftime of a Utah Jazz game.

That night they played Marsh Valley and Tim made 13 points, including three three pointers! With the score tied with just a few seconds left, Tim was bringing the ball down the court and got a "traveling" called on him and it changed possession forcing us to foul and they made their foul shots and we lost.

Today in church one of the varsity players was teasing him about the game and said that they ought to give him a new nickname, "the traveling man". I guess being in the limelight can be a two-edged sword. Anyway, it was a pretty exciting week as ball games go and it's been fun to share it. [Tim] I want to add something: I LOST $45.00 in the stock market. Boy, hasn't this last week been exciting!

Friday night Tim held a small party for some of his friends and about 11:00 Daddy and I decided to go to bed. We were just kneeling for prayer when the doorbell rang. I couldn't imagine who in their right mind would be calling at that hour but when Tim went to the door, I heard the unmistakable voice of Nate and Chad! They said that they were in the neighborhood and decided to drop in for a visit.

The truth of the matter was that they were on their way to Billings to check out some jobs and decided to stop and visit for a few minutes. Try as I might I couldn't convince them to spend the night nor to have a bowl of ice cream. They had been eating cinnamon bears all the way from Salt Lake and neither of them had much of an appetite left. We had a fun, short visit and caught up on all the news of both families. Chad will be graduating in April and he and Nate are thinking about moving to Billings where there are some good opportunities and some good contacts through Marlaynes' husband, Kurt.

I hope that it will all come together for them. I know it will be a major change for the whole family as they have lived in the Richland area for a long time and have a lot of roots there.

Some of you have asked about Chelsea's husband, Ryan. Nate said that he is still pretty weak and unable to do much but that now that it has been diagnosed, he ought to be able to manage if he is careful and prudent with his stress levels and diet. They feel very fortunate that they didn't lose him.

My YW and school board duties continue to occupy my time and attention. Last week at the junior high school four girls overdosed on Tylenol and were rushed to the hospital. Two were sick enough that they were in the hospital for several days, maybe suffering liver damage.

The junior high principal was with his wife who was delivering a baby and the superintendent was out of the office, so it was kind of a frantic situation with no one in command when the problems arose. It was fortunate that they were able to get help for the girls as speedily as they did. It has been a real education for me to

become aware of the many problems we deal with right here in "River City" and to be grateful for the gospel and anchor it is in our lives.

Let me end with this story about SaraKay. The other day she came home from school and asked me when she was going to be resurrected. I proceeded to explain the finer points of dying, Paradise, and the eventual reuniting of body and spirit. (What a wonderful teaching moment) When I was partway into my discourse she interrupted me and said, "No, resurrected at the Moreland School." I began to wonder if there was more going on in the district than I had realized.

Finally, after a few more explanations I realized that she meant "Recognition" instead of resurrection. That day they had honored some students in a Recognition Assembly and she just wondered when she was going to be officially resurrected (I mean recognized)! So much for gospel doctrine!

[Dad] Mom and Sara Kay are on their way to piano lessons, so I better get this typed up. It has snowed a little and the wind has been howling all night long. This kind of weather makes us appreciate our wood-burning stove. It makes such a difference!

Last week was another busy week; it seems like January is running away from us. One of the biggest events for me last week was my annual review. BSA has a classification schedule on our critical achievements or goals that are set at the first of the year of Marginal, Expected, Significantly Exceeds, and Far Exceeds. On my 10 critical achievements I had two-FE's, 2-E's, and 6-SE's. It is good to feel the approval and appreciation of your file leader and to know that you are doing a great job and making a significant contribution to the organization.

Sometimes, as I work along with much of my effort in the background and taking quite a bit of time to materialize, I wonder if anyone even notices. Based on our records, we should qualify for the Golden Record again for adding more than $1 million to the Council Endowment fund during 1996 with over $130,000 of that in cash--which has been a significant improvement.

I had the opportunity to take Kim, the Scout Executive, out to the high school because we are changing our format for the Council Silver Beaver Recognition from two dinner events, one in each end of the council, to one non-dinner event at a central location--the Snake River auditorium. I didn't realize that the high school is 17 years old! It seems like just a few years ago that it was brand new and you older kids were attending there.

I have thoroughly enjoyed President Hinckley's book. When we visited Dad Sunday night he said that he read it in three or four days and Alva Lu is working on it now. Last night I read President Carmack's article in the Ensign regarding coping with wayward children. I couldn't help feeling a great deal of gratitude for the goodness of each of you and your desire to do what is right by the Lord.

January 27, 1997

This past week Daddy and I got started on some long overdue projects of organizing our file cabinets and closets. About two years ago when we got rid of the old black file cabinet, I discovered that a lot of my good reference materials were totally out of date. It was interesting that even the materials that were church related such as talks, magazine articles, and handouts, were so old fashioned that I wouldn't have wanted to use them. That experience got me wondering just how much of the stuff in these other cabinets was useless. It has been a very time consuming but fun project to work on.

I've wondered about the advisability of having one location as the repository for family documents and pictures. In last month's Ensign there was an article about the hurricane victims in Florida. Some of the residences were totally destroyed and furniture and other possessions gone forever.

As I was cleaning out the scrapbook drawer, I located missionary letters and pictures, immunization records, high school memorabilia, and other documents. As I go through this process I will sort things by child and then when I am finished, I will get these things to you to do with as you please.

I really have no way of knowing what is truly important to you and what could be discarded. The second consideration is that many of you are much cleverer than I am and would do a more professional job compiling them.

I also sorted through the shelves in the guest bedroom and decided that I should get the scrapbooks and family history copies to you that are yours. Several of you have requested some help in getting started on your genealogy and I think one of the first steps should be making sure that each of you have a copy of the family histories available including Grandpa and Grandma Larsens, Grandma Gooch's, the one we did for Grandpa and Grandma Richards, and the Richards' family tree.

John has access to some high-tech equipment at the hospital that he said he could get the histories scanned and printed. I realize that your time is precious and that the Lord expects us to care for the living before the dead, so I don't want to put any pressure on anyone if you are overwhelmed with the load you are already carrying.

Last night I tried to call Uncle Nate to wish him a happy birthday but no one was home. I then called Grandma Richards to see if he was visiting with them. She informed me that Nate was in Spokane helping Chelsea and Ryan.

Ryan got really sick again and he was hospitalized Saturday. Maurine has been in Spokane for the past week and upon returning home and sharing the situation with Nate, he left and spent the weekend there with them.

It is a very trying time for the whole family. My heart goes out to Nate and Maureen. Their lives have been full of many difficult experiences and heartache and now to have this with Ryan. Chelsea is working and caring for him and their new baby; she has struggled with knowing what to do. They would appreciate your prayers.

Yesterday I visited with Randy Cox whose son, Doug, is due home from his mission in about 10 days! I expressed how thrilling it is to get a son home from a mission. Randy got teary-eyed and shared with me some feelings about Doug's mission and his mission president. Doug hasn't had a very good experience with his president and has never felt like he was loved or appreciated. Randy had such a positive experience with his own mission president that he feels like Doug has really missed out. I realize that not all missions are satisfying and that whenever humans are involved, there is always the challenges of relationships.

Some of you missionaries in our family had better experiences with your presidents than others. It's just the nature of things, but I hope that Mike feels good about his president and is able to draw strength and love from that association.

Several of you have asked about Tim's ball games. He is still the number one guard and is having a wonderful year. His ability to set up plays and make good passes is uncanny. He is a great team player and has the respect of the coaches and players alike. They played Bear Lake Friday and he had nine rebounds and seven assists.

They won by 15 and varsity won by two in overtime. The varsity is currently ranked 4th in the state and should be 2nd when the polls come out tomorrow.

He and Shane Jenks competed last week and won the Blackfoot division of the McDonalds shooting contest. Last Saturday Daddy took him to Rupert for the area competition. I offered to go and let Daddy stay home since he had spent the better part of Friday driving to Utah and back on scout business, but he said he didn't mind and so I settled in for a quiet day with SaraKay.

It wasn't very long before it started to snow and I was grateful that I hadn't been the one going to Rupert. Several hours later I got a call from Tim informing me that he and Shane won in Rupert and would need to compete in Salt Lake for the chance to shoot in the Delta Center in a Jazz halftime. They would receive information on it.

When they started home and got onto the freeway outside of Rupert, they became involved in a terrible traffic jam caused by a multi-car\semi-truck accident and they were waiting for the police to clear the freeway so they could get on their way. Tim said that Daddy walked nearly a mile up the freeway to see what was going on, but he stayed in the car because he had only worn his gym shorts and shoes and t-shirt. Luckily, he had taken a winter coat and was able to wrap up in that to keep warm.

After walking a considerable distance and still not finding the accident, Daddy headed back to the car and noticed that he knew some of the occupants of the waiting cars so he began visiting with people and took his time getting back to Tim. Meantime an officer came along and notified people that it would be about another hour before they could get on their way.

Once the roadway was cleared, the blowing snow made visibility nearly zero. Daddy said it was one of the worst storms he had ever driven in! I was thoroughly relieved to have them finally arrive home safe and sound. Of course, I reminded Tim that this was a perfect example of why I always say that one should never travel in the winter without adequate bedding and clothing in case of an emergency.

When I talked to Paul last night he told me of a funny experience they had last week with the MORP dance. Their roommate, Don, had a date and Paul, Merritt, and Bret offered to create a romantic candlelight dinner for the big event. They dressed up like waiters, brushed up on their Italian accents, and served an elegant meal.

The only problem they had was when Merritt poured the Martenelli apple juice, it began to fizz and ran over the top of the glass onto the tablecloth. In a desperate attempt to avoid a mess, with as much finesse as possible, Merritt politely leaned over and slurped the froth from Don's date's glass. Paul said they all got to laughing so hard about it that they nearly lost their accents.

I better close and go curl my hair. Last week when I washed it, I blew it dry and before I got it styled I got involved with other things and completely forgot that it was standing on end. A while later Tim arrived home and visited with me for a few minutes in the kitchen. Pretty soon he hesitated and then he commented, “Mom, I don't want to offend you or anything, but is that a new hairdo you are trying out?" Only then did I remember that I hadn't curled it yet. When I explained that to him, he was relieved. "Thank goodness," he said. "You had me worried!"

[Dad] I can't believe how busy we keep this computer. I don't know how we would exist without it! Letters, agendas, homework, scheduling, finances, genealogy, e-mail, and the list goes on. With Shauntel's help last night we found out how to do something on our genealogy

that should result in some temple work for us to do as well as pinpointing some areas we can focus on.

We also discussed responsibility. One of the few times responsible is used in the scriptures is when the plates were given to the Prophet Joseph Smith with the charge to be responsible for them. I liked the article in the Church News about the subject. We discussed how we are responsible for our emotions, our finances, our cleanliness, our relationships, our work, our health, our neighborhoods, and community, and our Church.

"Responsibilities surround us like layers of an onion. It wasn't always that way. After we were born, our parents began teaching us to be responsible in a hundred different ways: to pick up our toys, to not waste our food, to share with others, to not hurt other children, to be careful of the words we used, to take care of ourselves ."

"Without the concept of responsibility, the world could not function. Neither could the, Church, which depends completely upon its members' willingness to accept assignments and then perform them. As Church members we recognize this every time we raise our hands to sustain each other."

February 3, 1997

[Mom] We've had a very busy week keeping up with Tim's ball games which are two nights a week. We thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to support him. Our varsity squad is ranked second in the state and the game Saturday night was exciting and the grandstands crowded. It has been interesting to watch the support grow as the team has moved up in the polls.

Last week the paper ran a nice article about the team and even mentioned the JV' s and their enviable record. Last Saturday Tim played most of the game. It was a very physical contest and a close match-up. With about 30 seconds left we were up by 2 points. Tim was fouled and made his shots. We got the ball. Tim was fouled again and made two more shots. We got the ball. Again, they fouled him and he made one of two shots. It was pretty exciting. He ended up with 21 points for the game! By the time the game was over, I felt like a bundle of nerves. A lot of the games have been on Tuesday night so I have missed seeing them because of school board and YW, but Daddy has tried to catch them all. The season will soon be over.

We have yet to hear whether Tim and Shane will be shooting hoops on February 15th in the Delta Center. There are a total of 215 communities that compete for the honor and they take the top two teams. At this point, Tim's team is in second place but there are about two areas yet to report scores.

Saturday I was in charge of feeding the JV and Varsity teams, the coaches, and managers before the game. This is something the mothers of the team members have done all season as a booster club activity. We prepare dinner and serve it to the boys in the Home Ec room about 3:30 the day of the game. It was a lot of work. I worked with three other mothers and we had things ready by 3:30.

The teams had been in the gym for a shoot-around for the previous hour and all at once they arrived in the Home Ec room. Pam Cox, the head of the program, called on the team captain to ask someone to give the blessing. It was touching to see that bunch of "jocks" praying together for the food and for the upcoming game.

The minute the blessing was over, they all moved to the food line. I was taking care of last minute details and they closed in and I felt like a midget in the middle of a tall stand of trees. It was nice when nearly every ball player came up afterwards and

thanked us. It is a sweet privilege for Tim to be associated with such a fine bunch of athletes. It hasn't always been that way. Some years the athletes have not set the right example but this year has been a wonderful experience. Tonight Tim will be inducted into Honor Society.

Yesterday I had 13 Laurels in our YW class. The lesson was on the Holy Ghost. I assigned some girls to share personal experiences about how the Holy Ghost has blessed their lives. Being fast Sunday, everyone was a little subdued but the responses, both prepared and extemporaneous, were very touching. There were a lot of tears as the YW told of times that they had sought the Lord and He had manifested himself to them and made known to them that He loved and cared for them.

It was a payday for me. I know that these girls face a multitude of challenges every day and I relish the opportunity to meet each Sunday and reaffirm the gospel's value to them. I have come to know and love each of the YW in our ward and it has been thrilling to be a part of their lives. One of our girls is returning this Wednesday from being in a drug rehab center for the last six months. She is apprehensive about fitting in after such a long absence. Hopefully we can help her make the transition.

At my monthly library board meeting we finalized a policy for public use of the Internet on the library computers. I have been grateful for Daddy and all the know-how he has shared with me so that I can contribute and feel like everything isn't Greek. As we discussed the policy for use, I again was able to raise the question of setting limits on sites and inappropriate materials. Linds' advice has now become a part of both our school and public library policies and I feel good that as a community we are doing what we can to sponsor things that are uplifting and appropriate. I have seen that a community has the power to provide and encourage decency or to permit degrading things to creep in. It's been a neat experience to feel that we are doing all we can to create an environment that would enhance the goodness of the children who grow up here.

I am including an e-mail that we received from Nate and Maureen regarding Chelsea and Ryan. Nathan called earlier in the week and thanked our family for the loving show of support in their behalf. He said that Ryan has been surprised that he would receive cards and letters from cousins that he hardly knows. He and Chelsea have been very touched by the kindness our family has shown.

Shauntel called regarding the Johnson disk. She and Randy were tinkering with it and discovered a way to extract information from it in regards to incomplete ordinance work. Daddy followed their instructions and ran his own disk through the program and came up with several pages of information. He then visited the stake library, checked the names against Salt Lake's info and came home with 12 baptisms,15 endowments, 30 sealings to parents, and 2 sealing to spouses that need to be done. It was exciting! John is doing some organizing on family lines so we can easily know where the lines end as well as assure that no ordinance and person has been overlooked.

[Dad] We found out tonight that Grandpa and Alva Lu are looking at a mission call shortly to South or Central America. They are going on a trip to Costa Rica on the 14th of this month and based on their conversations with Salt Lake, they should know by then. They will probably leave around the first of April.

We had an FHE with Gary and Linda, Rick and Terry, and Dad & Alva Lu tonight and had a great time. That news was the icing on the cake! They have a lot of details to

take care of to get ready for that departure but they are going to be fantastic missionaries. By the way, it is a two-year call.

February 11, 1997

[Mom] Daddy and I spent a fun weekend last Friday and Saturday in Utah. The BSA regional director hosts a dinner for all councils who qualify each year in meeting their enrollment goals. Our council qualified and so we were treated to a night at the "Inn at Temple Square" and a delicious dinner at the Joseph Smith Memorial Building. We also attended a delightful play "She Loves Me" at the Hale Theatre done in a "theatre-in-the-round." We decided to make a weekend of it and visit the newlyweds in Provo and spend some time with John, too.

Tim had a game with Preston Friday night at Preston so we left early enough to go to the game, continued on via Logan canyon to Provo that night and spent the night with Becky and Chet.

Chet was still at work when we first got there so Becky showed us through the apartment and then we went over to Chet's workplace (Days Inn) and visited with him until his shift was completed. He is evening manager for the motel and combines those duties with homework during the quiet times. We sat in the cozy lobby area and visited and ate some cheesecake that Becky had prepared for the occasion. It was very satisfying to spend the time with them. They make a great team!

Saturday we picked up John and had a good visit over breakfast. He is enjoying school and has done a lot of work in his genealogy class organizing the information on disks that he has received from various family members. He continues to please his superiors at the hospital and has a good relationship with his bishop and friend, Bishop Sowell.

He recently had a date with a girl who was Marla's trainer when she first arrived in England on her mission. It was a strange addition to the "Marla chapter" because he discovered that she knew a lot about him from her close association with Marla. Marla's last comment to her trainer was, "Don't go home and marry John." I guess as far as John is concerned he is just taking life a date (I mean a day) at a time and not getting too anxious until "Miss Right" appears.

Following the dinner Saturday night we strolled around the Memorial Building marveling at the grandeur and beauty of the lobby area. In the very center there was a display honoring President Abraham Lincoln. I thought how impressive it will be to the thousands of visitors who will flock to Salt Lake for the Olympics in a few years to see Temple Square and other historical sites and learn about the people who pioneered the area.

At the dinner, Kevin Pay, a member of Afterglow, performed. Daddy was able to visit with him prior to the dinner. He is a part of the committee that hosts guests that come to Salt Lake in regards to the Olympics. He told Daddy that there was a Mongolian delegation that arrived and during their stay they toured Temple Square and as a result of their impressions, Mongolia has recently been opened to missionary work.

Kevin says he has seen some amazing things happen already in regards to the Church and the influence it's having on visitors coming because of the Olympics. Members of the Church in the Utah area are hosting visitors in their homes during the games. This will provide a close-up look at the grass roots of the church that would be difficult to duplicate in any other way.

Yesterday was full of frustrations including missing a dental appointment, receiving a check bounce notice, and hurrying too fast to get things done in the time allotted.

As I left Wal-Mart carrying 12 goldfish for Tim's science project and several bags with sundry items from lightbulbs to valentines, I thought how drab my life is at times. I felt guilty entertaining that thought in light of all the wonderful times we've had lately. But, I guess having those kinds of days are normal and even necessary. Anyway, today dawned brighter, Sara Kay got through her piano lesson with no upsets, and life is good.

[Dad] Sunday we drove back from Salt Lake to arrive early enough to get lunch, lessons, and SaraKay ready for Church at 11:00, choir at 4:00, trek meeting at 5:00, stake priesthood meeting at 6:00, and home teachers at 7:30.

I've just started working on our taxes and am a little concerned because of losing some dependents last year. I know the Lord blesses us for sending out missionaries and paying our tithes, and those blessings are sometimes all that carry us through.

"None of us...knows enough. The learning process is an endless process. We must read, we must observe, we must assimilate, and we must ponder that to which we expose our minds. I believe...in the evolution of the mind, the heart, and the soul of man. I believe in improvement. I believe in growth." President Gordon B. Hinckley

"Most putts don't drop. Most beef is tough. Most children grow up to be just people. Most successful marriages require a high degree of mutual toleration. Most jobs are more often dull than otherwise. Life is like an old-time rail journey--delays, sidetracks, smoke, dust, cinders, and jolts, interspersed only occasionally by beautiful vistas and thrilling bursts of speed. The trick is to thank the Lord for letting you have the ride."-Jenkins Lloyd Jones

"I feel very optimistic....I feel the spirit of Christ is brooding over the nations of the earth. Of course there are problems, many and serious...[But] there are men and women by the tens of thousands who are reaching out...to help those in distress....I feel optimistic--guardedly so, yes, because of the extent of evil in the world. But...goodness is gaining, and the work of the Lord is growing in strength and power." President Gordon B. Hinckley

"No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God...and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire and which will make us more like our Father and Mother in Heaven." --Orson F. Whitney

February 18, 1997

[Dad] Yesterday was a holiday and I stayed home and got a lot of things done. We received a phone call from Paul and he said he would be coming home Sunday afternoon and would stay until Monday afternoon--long enough to get his laundry done, eat some home cooking, and (he didn't know it) we were going to put him to work. Sunday, the Bishop pulled me aside and said that as the Nielsen's were moving they said they didn't want to be bothered with the firewood they had left and for the Bishop to give it to someone who could use it. I said we would be delighted and would be able to move it on Monday. So, we went

to work hauling real logs for firewood, not the pallet scrap junk we have been used to. Will Thomas saw us working and came over to help with his pickup. We hauled five loads of wood home and really replenished our supply. We probably almost have enough for this next winter. What a blessing!

It was interesting that as Tim and I were loading the wood box on Saturday he asked, "Do you remember when we used to have real logs for firewood?" Sometimes the Lord answers unasked prayers just because he knows your needs!

It was fun to have Paul here. He is such a bright, cheerful, good helper. After we were through with the wood, we went in to Shepherd Truss for him and Tim to get applications to work there this summer. Then we went to Molina's for a little dinner and male bonding. It was fun to be together. I'm afraid he didn't get much time for any schoolwork while he was home, but it was worth it to him (and us) otherwise.

The BB season is finally over for Tim. He has really had a good season and been an asset for the team. Thursday night they played Marsh Valley here. Dad and Alva Lu came to the game and were delighted to see him play. We finally won in overtime and much of the credit went to Tim shooting foul shots time and again. He ended up with about 16 points for the night and his usual compliment of assists and rebounds.

Sunday, I ended up teaching the High Priests, as well as my Sunday School class. It was interesting to have the two preparations and lessons for such diverse groups. We also fed the missionaries and I couldn't help but hope that members were taking as good of care of our Mexico missionary.

I will be going to a seminar in Dallas next month, March 9-12. I'm excited to be able to spend a little time with Dave & Andrea and their girls and to see their home.

Thought for the week: *"We are the first generation to attempt to raise and educate young people who, until they become adults, have no role to play in the well-being of the family and community. These young people, over 3.5 million of whom are born every year, arrive into a culture that no longer offers the stability of rituals, traditions, and activities that validate and reinforce their cultural roles.*

"From the cradle to the twentieth year of life, most children in America are told, 'Keep your mouth shut. Stay out of difficulty. Get good grades. Do what we tell you. Appreciate what we do for you.' They are not told, 'You are absolutely critical to the survival of our family. We need you. We could not accomplish what we do without your participation.' Is it any wonder, then, that our young people feel resentful and are restless?"

Let me just close with a reminder of how important each of you are to the survival of our family. We need you, we want you, we love you, we pray for you, and we certainly couldn't accomplish what we have and are without your input and participation.

[Mom] We enjoyed a pleasant holiday complete with having Paul home for a few hours. We were in the middle of Sunday dinner with the missionaries when he arrived, laundry basket and all. I'm always so glad to see him and catch up on what's happening at Ricks. This time he did have some rather interesting news to share regarding a new acquaintance he has made and had two dates with. She is from Idaho Falls and rooms with Mike's ex-girlfriend, Sally Ogden. He met her in his social dance class and they have been good friends ever since. I think this relationship may add a little more interest to the upcoming summer since most of Paul's close friends will be leaving on

missions and he will have the entire summer to wait until he can go. As Daddy mentioned, Paul has applied at a truss shop and hopes to find good employment to help with his mission expenses.

Paul's dating this year has been pretty infrequent and he was feeling a bit awkward and uncertain with the situation so Merritt offered to double date with him and then give him some pointers on how to handle the situation.

After the date, Merritt had only one bit of advice, "She's got the hots for you! Carry On!" Isn't it great to have friends who can cheer you on? That apartment of boys has had a fun year together and continue to enjoy their close association.

I tried Sunday night to call John but never did get through. Monday morning he called and spent most of the time talking about his girlfriend. Seems that things are going very well between them and they have spent a lot of the last week together. She is from Ohio and recently returned from a mission to England. She hasn't even had a chance to return home since she arrived four days into winter semester. She started immediately into her classes and so her family is flying to Utah to see her and visit some grandparents at the same time. She has invited John to meet them. (As Daddy would say, "The thot plickens!")

John has also had some interesting opportunities for housing and management responsibilities open up through his friend, Bishop Sowell, and he is excited about that.

This time of year I start thinking about the oncoming months and wondering what to do and when to do it. Several things have been on my mind. First in regards to Becky and Chet. Will they be here this summer or not and if not, how far away? Will John be getting married and if so, when, and should we try as a family to all be together for that occasion or would it be impossible. If we did get together for an early summer wedding, should we move ahead with our Larsen reunion at Treasure Mountain Scout Camp in August?

Will Shauntel and Randy get a baby and if so, how will that effect their plans as far as being able to come for anything? With the American airlines reduced rates, should we try to get everyone to fly into Salt Lake the Sunday before the reunion in July and work out a shuttle situation to get you to Treasure Mountain and a three-day camping reunion or would that be too expensive and time- consuming for all of you?

I know the deadline for the reduced airline fares is March 3 so we don't have a lot of time but we don't want a lot of expense in tickets if we aren't sure what's going on. On the other hand, with the reunion date a certainty, (August 11-13) maybe that should be the date to focus on and try to be together for that. I need some input from each family. Let me know.

Grandpa Larsen and Alva Lu left Friday for a week's vacation before finalizing plans for their mission departure. They have not yet received a call nor date of departure, which has been rather disconcerting to them, but they are making a lot of preparations and hopefully will receive word soon.

Grandma Richards called and said that Chelsea and Ryan are doing much better. He was in the hospital for a second time last week and the doctors thought they were going to have to operate and remove some of his intestines. When they took x-rays the day before the surgery, they discovered that the disease had gone into remission and he wouldn't have to have the extensive work done that they had originally prescribed. They felt that the Lord had intervened and he was able to go home. It has been such a trial for them!

Daddy didn't go into much detail regarding Tim's last game. In the last l:37 seconds Tim was at the foul line six times. Every time our team got the ball the other team would foul us. They were behind and couldn't afford a stall and since Tim is the ball handler, it was always him that they fouled. He did a great job at the foul line despite the pressure he was under.

It reminded me of the Snake River\Preston game when Becky was a senior and they were playing for championship. Becky was at the foul line and won the game for them in the final few seconds with her foul shooting. Her coach, Pat Tiede, approached me after the game and commented that Becky had "nerves of steel." We have had several people since the game comment on Tim's cool demeanor under pressure.

I reminded him of that last night as we were scooping dead gold fish out of the "sugar- water" bowl and he was making faces and trying to convince me to do it for him. "How can someone who stands up to Marsh Valley's tough defense be so squeamish about a dead goldfish?" I asked him.

Which brings me to the last event of the past week. We have now purchased a total of 22 goldfish from Wal-Mart and have only 8 left. One by one, for who knows what reason, they have died. I wasn't sure we were going to have any left for Tim to exhibit at school in his science class. We've changed containers, changed water, put fewer in the containers, bought different food, changed the location of the bowl, talked to them, sang to them, and in short, tried our best to keep them alive, but to no avail. One even went so far as to leap out of the bowl onto the bar and die there.

When I came into the kitchen and saw it, I hurriedly threw it into the fish bowl and watched to see if it had recuperated. I thought I saw a fin flutter so I said a quick prayer. When no signs of life appeared, I put my hand in the bowl and gave its chest a few squeezes thinking that it might jar its heart into beating, but that didn't work either. When all else failed, I got the slotted spoon and fished it out and put it down the disposal. Later Tim complained that he felt like it at least deserved a flush instead of a grind, so now we do that.

Anyway, it's been a rather depressing week of watching over the fish and I'm anxious to see the project come to an end. The only hypotheses we have proven to be true throughout this lengthy science experiment is that Tim hates goldfish and will avoid having them as pets in the future.

February 24, 1997

[Mom] Last Friday Daddy left about five to attend an overnight Wood Badge staff training session, Tim had an ice fishing overnighter, and SaraKay and I had an evening to ourselves. Before the weekend was over, I had heard from most of the family. When Daddy got home about three on Saturday, I had lots of news!

Probably the most exciting was that Grandpa and Grandma Richards sold their home in Richland. A young couple expressed an interest several weeks ago and have continued to come back, each time with new questions. They wanted it but weren't sure they could pull the finances together. Earlier in the week they indicated that they were ready to make an offer and so Grandpa and Grandma got papers together and went over their figures with Nate so that they would be ready if the offer was a good one.

Friday night they met for a couple of hours, negotiated and came up with a price that suited everyone. If things go as planned, they will be ready to move by the end of March.

When Grandma called to tell me about it, she asked if I would be willing to help Kathy look for a condominium that would be

suitable for their needs. I assured her that I would. A few hours later, she called again and informed me that she had just talked to Kathy and Dick and they had located a condo on 45th South and 23rd East that they felt confident would meet their needs. Things seemed to be falling into place!

This morning Lisa called and gave me a tentative schedule for the move. She and Don are going to take a week's vacation and drive Grandpa and Grandma to Salt Lake. They will arrive the weekend of April 4,5,and 6, hopefully so that Friday afternoon the big items can be unloaded on Friday evening.

The next day is general conference and Paul will be performing at the Priesthood session Saturday night with the Ricks College Men's Choir. Lisa and I thought it would be fun if Grandpa, Daddy, Dick, Don, Layne, Chad, Steve, Chet, John, Tim, and Skyler could go to the priesthood session together while the rest of us gathered at Kathy and Dick's.

When Tim got home from his campout we had to thaw him out. He left the night before confident that he had what he needed to keep warm. He took several layers of socks and sweaters, sweatshirts, coats, gloves, and hats. He thought he would survive in good shape. But, most of the group of 15 had a miserably cold night and spent part of the morning huddled by a propane heater trying to get warm. Three of the boys slept in the front of the leader's pickup with the motor running and heater going most of the night.

Hearing him tell about it brought back memories of other campouts, feet that felt like blocks of ice, and nights that seemed to last an eternity. After the sun came out midmorning, they had fun jumping off cliffs into deep snow and using an instrument that tracks the movement of the fish beneath the ice. On the way home, they stopped at Lava Hot Springs and soaked in the hot pools.

I received a call early Saturday morning from Paul. Three of his roommates got their mission calls. Merritt is going to Columbia, Justin to Lithuania, and Brett to Australia, Mandarin speaking. Paul said that each afternoon last week, they would be at the apartment at 3:15 because that was the time that their mother's back home were going to call if the envelopes had arrived.

As the week progressed, the anticipation grew and Thursday afternoon Paul and all his roommates were sitting in the living room waiting for the phone to ring. Merritt left for a minute to go into his bedroom and so Paul slipped out of the apartment and went next door and phoned his apartment. Within seconds of the first ring, an excited Merritt picked up the receiver.

"Hello!" "Hi, Merritt. This is Paul. How ya doing?"

"Paul, you jerk!" was the reply. Paul said they all had a good laugh over it. Anyway, the calls did arrive with Friday's mail so Merritt, Brett, and Justin headed home for the weekend.

Jonie also called and said she had given notice at the bingo hall that she would be quitting. She has felt an increasing concern that Sidney and Cory need her at home in the evenings to help them with their school work. Cory is anxious to learn but the teachers don't have much interest in challenging her and Jonie feels like a little home tutoring might go a long way towards helping her develop her reading skills. They are considering getting a computer. I should warn Jonie that once you get a computer, you are hooked! I love ours and can't imagine ever going back to a typewriter.

I'm proud of Jonie for her efforts to give her daughters a good education. She'll never

regret the time she spends with them during these formative years.

Things in Provo are going well. Becky's work is smoothing out a little and Chet's final semester is nearly half over. The next few months are important ones for him as he is involved with job interviewing. John continues to spend time with Laurel (sorry I omitted her name last week but I couldn't for the life of me remember what it was.) This weekend is the big one when he will get to meet her family who will be flying in from Ohio.

Laurel's sister, who also lives in Provo, had a baby yesterday so it sounds like the family has a lot of reasons to make a trip to Utah. John said that they are enjoying dating and not rushing into anything. She sounds like a neat girl and we are anxious to meet her!

Daddy is flying to Dallas on March 7th and hopefully John and Laurel can visit with him at the airport in Salt Lake before he catches his flight.

Daddy is looking forward to spending some time with David and Andrea and girls. What a wonderful opportunity for him to get to see them and take care of business at the same time!

Steph and Shauntel are both looking forward to being together the last week in March. Shauntel has a business trip to California scheduled and she and Randy are using their travel allowance for that trip and going by way of San Jose and spending a few days with Linds and Steph. They hope to take in some sights and enjoy the chance to be together. It's hard to believe that Randy is almost through with his third year of medical school and that their time in Iowa is drawing to a close. I'm sure there have been times when it seemed like it would never be finished, but they've almost made it!

When I talked to Steph she said that they would come in August for Treasure Mountain.

Bonnie and Steve are welcoming a new baby the first week in August so they are going to forego this year's reunion, too, but they also expressed a hope that we would do it again next year. Bonnie has been feeling good with this pregnancy and she and Steve are getting involved in their newly created ward. It has been an interesting experience to get in on the ground level of a new ward and they have felt accepted and needed.

We continue to enjoy hearing from Mike and sense in his letters that he is accepting his trials and rejoicing in the opportunity to spread the restored gospel. We have been especially grateful that he has enjoyed good health.

[Dad] I talked to Gary this morning and found out that Dad and Alva Lu's departure date is April 9. They are still in Costa Rica and then going to Acapulco and so they won't be home for another week and a half.

Last week it was fun to go to the first District BB Tournament game in Reed Gym in Pocatello and see Snake River win handily over Marsh Valley. They are playing tonight for the District Championship and a number one seed for the State Tournament. We will be going to the game and see how they do against Preston. We have beat them twice during the season, but they are a tough team and anything could happen tonight.

Next week I will be in Jackson Hole for a staff planning conference and then fly out Friday for a meeting in Dallas for five days. It will be hard to be gone on our anniversary next week. With our current budget and missionary donation, we are cutting all the corners we can.

I called today to cut our phone service down to the bare bones, cancelled the Post

Register subscription, and Sue is trying to get by on even less for food and use up some of our food storage. It is a good feeling to follow the council of our leaders with provident living, frugal use of our resources, and help to build up the kingdom at the same time.

Here's a thought from Henry James. When asked by his nephew what he ought to do in life, James replied, "*Three things in human life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. And the third is to be kind."* It is important that we be kind to each other within the family, but even more so, to find ways to be kind to others. That is a great manifestation of the pure love of Christ, of charity, within us and our reaching out to others enriches our lives as nothing else can.

[Tim] I thought it was about time for me to write again. Now that basketball is over nothing much is going on. However, I have the chance to work more now that I have more time.

Yesterday I worked for 10 straight hours besides a 20-minute lunch break. I earned $68.00. During that time, a man came and needed his truck loaded. He asked me if I could drive the fork lift and I said not very well. He said "Well, I'll save Randy the trouble and just have you do it for me." I was thinking "Boy, that's nice of you."

We didn't get along from the very beginning. The pallets were abnormal and he parked his flatbed truck so that I had almost no room to maneuver in. I couldn't do anything right the whole time and he let me know it. To make matters worse, his son was standing up on the truck grinning at the scene the whole time.

My interaction with him didn't end after he left. It did however sometime that night in a dream. I was on the football team and I went to tackle a player on the other team. He threw the ball to another one of his teammates for a touchdown. I went off the field and was telling the coach that I thought a player couldn't throw the ball after he was already past the line of scrimmage and running with the ball when I heard somebody in the crowd yelling at me. I turned around to see the same guy I had unloaded pallets for, yelling at me and telling me, "Don't you know anything about the game of football? You should have been guarding the guy downfield, not going for the tackle. Come on, Get with the program!" Luckily it was just a dream.

Nothing really exciting is going on around here. Something strange is the water. I turn the water to the hottest setting in the shower (usually you can just put it past the middle) and I stand and wonder when the water is going to get hot but it never does. Sometimes I think I can detect some heat but then realize it's just my imagination. The only thing I can figure out is that Mom and Dad want me to have a firsthand experience of what Mike is going through with the water in Mexico.

The heat from the fire does seem to make up for it. Upstairs is fine, it's when you attempt to go downstairs that you get into trouble. As you start your descent down the stairs, the heat seems to engulf and overcome you. When you reach the halfway point of the stairs, sweat trickles down your brow, and by the time you reach the downstairs your shirt is drenched from perspiration, your eyebrows are singed, and you become so faint that you must crawl along the ground or else passing out will become a reality. Actual time of staying downstairs must be kept to a bare minimum or else precious body fluids will be lost through perspiration. Now that I think about it, it probably isn't quite that hot but close to it. Well, I better go. I hope this family letter has given you a laugh or two. See you later. Love, Tim

[Mom] Recently Tim took the TAPP test and it didn't surprise us that his top score was

in creative writing! He can get pretty dramatic at times and we have a good laugh but I have to defend his statement about the hot water. For some reason, ever since we replaced the old water heater with the new one, we have not had the limitless hot water we used to have and it's been a little frustrating. Anyway, Tim does keep life interesting for us!

He didn't mention one nice thing that happened to him last week. One of the basketball coaches pulled him aside and confided in him that in the last coaches meeting they had discussed the upcoming basketball season and the potential team members. He told Tim that he had been mentioned as a strong candidate to make the Varsity team and that they hoped he would participate in summer ball and be ready. That was a nice compliment and gave him some encouragement.

After each game the coach gave each player a game stat sheet which listed such things as turn-overs, steals, rebounds, shots tried, shots made, and when the season was done, Tim's total season stats were third out of 13 players and first of the guards. He feels pretty good about the season although I think he has enjoyed having a break from it for a while.

Several of you have asked about John's weekend with Laurel's family. When I called him last night he was encouraged and optimistic and said that she comes from a wonderful family and that they had really enjoyed spending Saturday and Sunday with them. Everything seems to be going well. Hopefully they will come home for a weekend and we can get acquainted.

Grandpa and Grandma Larsen are due back from their vacation. They have a busy month ahead with all their preparations for their mission. A few days after they got their call, Jeanie phoned to visit for a few minutes. She began telling me about Julianne coming home in a few months, about Christian graduating, and about Bethany getting baptized. She said that they had considered having everything scheduled at the same time so that maybe some of the extended family would join them for the festivities.

When I mentioned that she must be excited to hear about Grandpa and Grandma's call, she questioned why I would say that. I realized that she didn't know they were coming to Arizona and when I broke the news, she was ecstatic! It will certainly be a treat for her family to have Mom and Dad closer.

My folks are packing up again and disposing of part of their things so that they can fit into the condo. I'm grateful that they have family close by to help them get this move made. It doesn't seem possible that it was only a year and a half ago that they moved to Richland. I'm grateful to have them closer, but I know that Lisa is having a rough time let them go. I know that Uncle Charles has enjoyed the opportunity to be closer these last couple of years, also, but with so many of his kids at Provo, I'm sure that he and Brenda will have times when they will be able to see them.

Tomorrow is our wedding anniversary. Thursday we are going to celebrate by going to the temple and then to dinner. Each time I think about the last 31 years I can hardly believe that the time has gone so quickly. And yet, when I remember specific events it seems like eons ago. I can't help comparing my perceptions of marriage now with what they were then and realizing that many of our experiences were very typical for newlyweds although at the time I wondered why life was so stressful.

With each year I am more grateful that despite some tough times we kept plugging away, working out our differences, and building the relationship. Looking back, I

wish I had been more accepting, loving, and tender. What I once saw as differences, I now view as strengths, recognizing that we complement each other. Daddy has been a devoted husband and father and given of all he is and has for our betterment. As the years pass our love deepens and we look forward to serving missions, taking vacations, and enjoying retirement. The poet said it best, "Grow old along with me; the best is yet to be!"

March 10, 1997

[Mom] With Daddy in Dallas and Tim in Logan on tour, I'm on my own this week.

Last week was a hectic one with the state basketball tournament in Boise and all the involvement of team members and their families, coaches, drill team, pep band, and bus drivers. The district had at least two buses that made the trip back and forth to Boise Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. School was dismissed early Friday to allow for those driving over for the game that evening. It was a thriller, with Snake River coming from an 18 point deficit to win by one point in the last seconds of the game. Winning that game put us in the championship game with Moscow Saturday night. How we would have loved to go to Boise and enjoyed being with Charles and Brenda who were there cheering for Sean who was the sixth man on the Moscow team. It was quite obvious that Moscow had us beat from the first quarter and we lost by 25 points.

Tim could have gone to the game on the activity bus but the prospect of a 10 hour bus ride and getting home at 3 in the morning was not to his liking so he stayed here with SaraKay and me and we listened on the radio. Blackfoot lost their bid for a state title also but someone told me today that their coaches and team attended the Snake River game on Friday and cheered us on. It was a sweet gesture and I'm sure it meant a lot to our team!

Last night we visited with Grandpa and Grandma Larsen about their plans and timetable. They will be having their farewell on March 23 although they are not scheduled to enter the MTC until April 9th. Their sacrament meeting begins at 11:00 and they are planning a get-together afterwards. I'm sure they would be pleased to have any of you come. They found out that they can take their fifth wheel trailer with them and live in it instead of finding an apartment when they get to Tempe. This will enable them to use their own furnishings instead of worrying about outfitting themselves when they get there.

They also will keep their vehicles. Miken (Jeanie's oldest daughter) lives very close to where they will be located and she is checking on trailer parks and facilities for them. They will be a valuable asset to the mission!

My parents continue to prepare for their move to Salt Lake. Grandpa spends his time in the garage preparing things there and Grandma is focusing on the inside cupboards, closets, etc. Nate finished siding his home and he will be leaving shortly for Billings and the job that is awaiting him there.

Sunday he called and we visited about the upcoming changes for him and his family. Maureen has cared for a newborn foster baby the last few months and the whole family has grown very attached to her. Last week an adoptive family was approved and the new family has been visiting Maureen and getting acquainted with the baby in preparation for the time that the official adoption will take place.

Nate commented that they have thoroughly enjoyed this beautiful little girl and said that he was going to miss waking up to her each morning. He said that Maureen puts her in bed in the early morning between them and she kicks and coos. When she sees that she has Nate's attention, she

beams with excitement. I could envision that sweet scene and couldn't help thinking how fortunate this little one was to have such a loving foster home in the interim before her adoption.

When Nate and Maureen move to Billings, they will have Maureen and Kurt and Chad and Trish and families both living there and it will be nice for them to be a little closer.

Last Thursday Daddy and I were headed to the temple to do an initiatory assignment. About an hour before we left for Idaho Falls, I got a call from Paul. He had just received his family letter and read that we were going to the temple and he called to say that he was going to be there also with his ward doing a baptismal assignment. I mentioned that Daddy had some names on a temple ready disk that we needed some baptisms done for and I wondered if he could add those to their ward's assignment. A quick phone call to the temple confirmed that we could do that and we took the disk, cleared it with the family history desk, had the names taken to the baptistry and Paul and a friend got those done for us.

Before we left the temple that evening, we were able to spend some time with Paul. It was a sweet experience. In a few short months Paul will be going through the temple for his own endowments. We would love to have that happen before John gets married so that Paul can attend the sealing.

John and Laurel are coming home this weekend. I'm excited for the chance to meet her.

Daddy visited with them last Friday before leaving the airport for Dallas and then Steve and Bonnie hosted them Friday evening. Becky and Chet have been surrogate parents for John these last few weeks and keep me updated on how things are progressing.

I've spent time the last few weeks reading the Work and the Glory series. It has been inspiring as well as informative. Although the main characters in the story are fictional, their experiences are pretty typical of the lives lead by the early converts to the church and it has been helpful to put the events of those early years in perspective. It has really given me a lot of food for thought and motivated some soul searching on my part as I have evaluated my attitudes about the sacrifices I am called to make for the gospel.

Tomorrow is school board meeting and I have a large packet to study. I noticed that we don't have any controversial items on the agenda, though, so that is a relief. I have enjoyed this assignment but sometimes with school board, Young Women's, and other pursuits, I have too many balls in the air.

I just received a call from John. The date is set for June 12th in the Mt. Timpanogas Temple. There will be a reception in Salt Lake that evening and then an open house here the following day. He sounded excited!

March 18, 1997

[Dad] When I awoke this morning, Sue asked me how I felt and I said, "Still tired". She said, "We have been on a treadmill lately, haven't we?" It has seemed like it, and it has been a long time since we have been able to get all the beauty rest that we need.

Let me start with last week--I had a great time in Dallas and was delighted to be able to spend some good time with Dave & Andrea, Laurel and Angela. I was glad to be able to go to Church with them and see the love that people have for them already. Dave does an excellent job with his Elder's Quorum lesson. We had a great turkey dinner that day with some friends of theirs that I found out are related to Patriarch Evans.

The highlight of the trip was an opportunity to go on a bike ride on the bike trail near their home. They borrowed a bike from a neighbor for me, packed a lunch, and when Dave got home from work we went about a mile down the trail to a place where we could feed the ducks and eat our lunch. Then we cycled to a park where the kids could swing and slide. It was almost dark by time we got home, but it was fun exercise and visiting time together.

I appreciated their generosity in getting me from the airport and putting up with me for 3 of the 5 nights I was in town and also loaning me their car to get back and forth from my conference. My sessions at the conference were great and I learned a lot that should help me with my job. I was impressed with the NSFRE and the quality job that they did. That stands for National Society of Fund Raising Executives. There were over 3800 people there from nonprofit associations. There were people from 19 foreign countries including Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Holland, & South Africa. The menu of breakout sessions allowed for a wide variety of interests and length of time in fundraising. The meals were mostly taken care of as part of the conference and were excellent at the Wyndham Anatole Hotel.

At one of the joint sessions Barbara Bush was the speaker and it was delightful to hear from her in person. She responded to questions from the audience and was so spontaneous and fun! One of her pet pursuits is encouraging reading to children. She said her advice to a new mother-in-law is: "Don't correct the daughter-in-law and read to the grandchild." And she talked about how you can raise a child's IQ by reading to them from birth to 3 years of age. She quoted Anthony as saying to Cleopatra as he entered her tent, "I didn't come to talk." Another thought from John Ruskin that she shared, *"The highest reward for honest toil is not for what you get for it but what you become through it–"*

[Mom] It was so good to have Daddy arrive home from Dallas and give us an update on Dave and Andrea. They really went out of their way to make him feel welcome. His stay was long enough that he even had some unrushed time to read to Laurel and Angela. Daddy said they have a lovely home and have done some attractive decorating since moving there in October. It's such a source of joy for us to visit with our married children and feel of their commitment to their spouses, families, and the Lord. Thanks, Dave and Andrea for all you did to make his stay so enjoyable.

Last Friday John and Laurel arrived and we thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to get better acquainted with her. She is from Cincinnati, Ohio and recently returned from serving a mission in London, England. She is the third child of six, five girls and one boy. Her mother's family are converts to the church. Her father is the great grandson of Joseph Fielding Smith. Laurel has a quick smile and a cheery disposition and we felt at ease with her immediately. She will graduate with her Bachelor's degree in December. She arrived home from her mission and went straight to Provo so she hasn't yet reported her mission. She and John are flying to Ohio in April so that he can spend a few days with her family and be there to hear her report her mission. It was obvious that they were fond of each other!

The plans for their wedding are as follows: Thursday, May 22, we will host a reception here for them. On Friday, May 23, they will be married in the Mt. Timpanogas Temple. There will be a wedding dinner that afternoon and an open house that evening at Bishop Sowell's residence in Provo.

The next exciting news is that Chet has taken a position with Maleleuca in Idaho Falls and he will start following graduation in April. We can't believe our good fortune at having them close. Of all the jobs he

was looking at, this one was the closest to what he wanted.

Last night we hosted the monthly Larsen family home evening. Following dinner, Daddy gave the lesson and as a part of the lesson he asked each of us to tell why we thought Grandpa and Grandma would make good missionaries. I was grateful for the opportunity to express some sentiments and there were others who shared some sweet things. I'm thrilled for them and know that the Lord will be able to use them to move the work ahead. Their farewell is this Sunday and Steve and Bonnie and family are coming on Saturday for the weekend, Paul will be home, and we may have Mark and Rita here, too.

This Friday I will be going to Ricks for Women's Week. I will spend part of the day with Paul going to classes, sit in on his Men's choir practice, go to lunch, cook supper together, and attend an evening concert of several of the performing groups on campus.

This past week Steve played "Mr. Mom" while Bonnie took a trip to St. Louis to visit her sister. I called him Friday and he seemed to be doing fine (she left Thursday) but by Sunday night when she returned he said he was ready to have her home! We're looking forward to time with them this weekend.

Grandpa and Grandma Richards are both in good health and nearing their moving date. They will arrive Friday in Salt Lake and papers will be signed that afternoon. We appreciate Mike's letters and feel his growth as he works to help his companion and the people in Chihuahua. On May 8th it will be a year since his departure!

March 23, 1997

[Dad] This past week seems to have flown by. My work has been demanding lately, with a lot of tight deadlines for events coming up and Trails to get out, invitations to get mailed, meetings to plan, and agendas.

This weekend has been especially fun as we had Steve and Bonnie and their little ones here since Saturday around 2:00 and Mark, Janette, and JoEllen here since last night. Gary came over last night about 8:30 and Karen came about 9:00 and we practiced songs for the "Larsen Brothers" to sing for Grandpa & Alva Lu's farewell. It was so fun to sing together! I think that is one thing that draws me and my brothers together more than anything.

Rick and Staff were able to join us today and so we practiced briefly before sacrament meeting and were able to have all five sons singing with Karen accompanying us. We did an awesome job! It was all the congregation could do to keep their seats and not burst forth with thundering applause and a standing ovation! Seriously, it really was a sweet experience to sing together and we didn't do too badly. I only regret that Jeanie couldn't be here.

Staff and Kathy are just biding their time until James is through with school in May and the Hinds, whose home they are living in, come home from being Mission President in the Dominican Republic and then they are going to move to Las Vegas. Chris and Jim were both with them today--one with a shaved head and the other with a full red beard.

Jeanette and JoEllen have grown up so much--they are lovely girls. We couldn't help feeling the satisfaction Mark and Rita are getting from their younger daughters to somewhat compensate for the challenges with Jessica. Jessica is still making small improvements that are more obvious from a distance.

I wanted to share a few thoughts with you from The Millionaire Next Door. Things America's millionaires have in common include:

1)living below their means

2)allocating time, energy, and money to build wealth

3)believing that financial independence is more important than displaying high social status

4)receiving no ongoing financial support from their parents

5)raising self-sufficient children

6)taking advantage of stock market opportunities, and

7)choosing the right occupation.

One startling revelation was that 80% of American millionaires were able to accumulate their wealth in one generation. *Interestingly enough, the same was true more than a century ago. Most of today's millionaires do not reach this status until they are age 50 or older. They would never have accumulated this amount of wealth if they had lived a high-consumption lifestyle.*

They are more likely to wear a Timex than a Rolex; drive a used Mercury instead of a new Mercedes; and shop at JC Penney rather than Brooks Brothers. They are seven times more likely to have a Sears card than an American Express platinum card. Nearly 95% of the millionaires studied own stocks and the majority have at least 20% of their wealth in publicly traded securities. But they are more likely to buy and hold than actively trade securities.

I hope these thoughts help each of you in your quest for financial independence so that when I retire you can help keep us in the manner to which we would like to become.

[Mom] As Daddy recounted, we had a full and fun weekend with the Larsen side of the family. We appreciated the chance for some good visits with Mark about his situation. Jessica's accident truly has been a life altering event and they are still grappling with all the decisions that need to be made for her best good. It is an ongoing saga that has required 24 hour-a-day care and continues to tax them and their resources.

Steve and Bonnie and Paul represented our immediate family at the farewell Sunday. It was fun to have them here and have a little time to visit and enjoy the grandkids. Rachel is doing a lot of talking now and Nathan makes a lot of interesting sounds. The only one that we heard continually throughout their stay was "Go home!" At least that was what we thought we were hearing and he always pointed when he said it so that confirms that we must have translated it correctly. We appreciated their making the trip to be here for the farewell.

My trip to Rexburg on Friday to attend Women's Week was memorable. I was able to attend the opening session and hear an insightful lecture by Gary and Joy Lundberg about relationships and then Paul and I had a leisurely lunch together before going to his Men's Choir practice. They are singing at the Priesthood session of conference in April. It was a thrill to watch the directors work with them. The music was heavenly!

Paul had arranged for us to visit Alison Batt and her mother after choir practice. It was obvious from the questions Mrs. Batt was asking that Alison had told her a lot about Paul. Alison is really a vivacious and capable young woman and I could see why Paul is so impressed with her. Following that visit we went to Paul's apartment and fixed a nice meal and ate with the other roommates and their mothers. That night we attended a concert of several performing groups on campus. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with Paul; it was a treat to share the day with him.

One of the unexpected joys of the trip was that we had warm weather and it made our walking and talking between events so pleasant. Spring was in the air and everyone was anxious to be out in the sunshine....us included!

Last night we attended Brigadoon for home evening. It was thoroughly enjoyable even though it seems strange to not have any of our own children participating. Tim has decided to try out for Chamber Singers next month and get involved in that if accepted.

He is now attending his early morning basketball classes so his day is a long one. SaraKay stayed home this morning from school because she was vomiting most of the night. Hopefully it won't affect the rest of us.

In the April Ensign there is an article about enduring trials written by Neal Maxwell. There is a small picture on the first page of the Savior in Gethsemane being comforted by an angel. It is a different portrayal of the suffering in the Garden and I was deeply touched by it. It looks to me like the angel is a woman and I guess I had always thought of a man when I read the scriptural account but as I read the article and studied the picture I wondered if Jesus's heavenly mother was permitted to attend to his needs during that terrible ordeal. Hopefully each of you will take time to read the article.

Bishop Godfrey told us in ward council Sunday that Elder Maxwell has cancer and has been hospitalized the last eight weeks. He needs our prayers. Also, I hope that we will remember both sets of grandparents as they make their final preparations for moving.

March 31, 1997

[Mom] The kids don't have school today so Sara Kay and I have had the morning together doing some housework and recuperating from our busy weekend. Tim left about nine to go to work at Randy's and Daddy is in the final throes of finishing up the quarterly newspaper. His boss wanted each paper addressed separately this time and that means putting labels on 7000 individual papers so Daddy recruited RSVP, a senior citizen's group that does community service in Idaho Falls and hopefully they will be willing to help him get out the mailing. Daddy has had a lot going on with weekend Wood Badge trainings, newspaper deadlines, and an upcoming Silver Beaver Recognition Night. His new boss seems to be pleased and appreciative of his efforts and values him as a member of the team. There have been some personnel changes since the new scout exec arrived and I've known that sometimes a change at the top creates ripples down through the organization, but Daddy seems to be weathering the changes and doing fine.

Last Thursday Chet flew in to Idaho Falls and spent the next two days checking on housing. Becky flew in Friday night and the two of them continued their search. They arrived here about six Saturday and we spent an enjoyable evening together. It was fun to have them attend our meetings yesterday. It is the first time they have been to our ward since their marriage last October. We had several comments on what a beautiful couple they make! It was fun to show them off. Chet seemed pleased with his job at Maleleuca and spent time at the main office on Friday. It's going to be nice to have them closer for a few years. The only bad incident of their trip was a blizzard Thursday night that interrupted the beautiful spring weather. That's Idaho! Yesterday was absolutely gorgeous again and today we have had rain and snow all morning.

Yesterday we went to visit Grandpa and Grandma Larsen and we were shocked to find out that Saturday Grandpa had had another accident. He had been loading and carrying things from their trailer when his

shoe caught in one of the metal steps and he toppled over and onto the cement driveway. His right eye was badly bruised and cut. By the time Sunday arrived, it was swollen shut. His new glasses were scraped and bent. Although he didn't have as many stitches as he did with his fall a couple months ago, the injury was deeper this time. Considering how far he fell and without any way of bracing himself, we felt like he was very fortunate that he didn't have a concussion or worse.

He and AlvaLu have had a multitude of details to take care of in preparation for leaving and despite this setback, they are checking things off their "to do" list and nearly ready to go. They will leave Tuesday and enter the MTC Wednesday morning. They will only be there a week before driving on to Tempe. It's going to be lonely without them close, but we are so grateful for their courage in accepting this assignment.

This morning in family prayer, Sara Kay blessed them to have a good mission. It's been a few years since we've had grandparents in the mission field and it felt good to add that to our prayers.

Grandpa and Grandma Richards are probably nearly ready to head south, too. Lisa will be driving them to Salt Lake on Thursday and Friday and the movers will unload things for them on Monday or Tuesday of next week.

I commented to Daddy that I couldn't believe how quickly they sold their home and were able to line up things in Salt Lake. The Lord has had a hand in the events of the past months and enabled them to get this move made in such a short time. Things are pretty harried in Richland right now with Nate moving his business to Billings, Maureen welcoming a new grandbaby (Marlayne's) and getting the house ready to sell, and Grandpa and Grandma Richards packing up things for the move.

I'm excited to be together this weekend in Salt Lake with family. We found out Sunday that Paul has spring break Thursday and Friday so he is going to come home, work for two days with Justin Bradshaw picking rock, and then accompany us to Salt Lake for conference and some family time.

The men will accompany Dick to a nearby stake center for the Priesthood session and the women will visit at Kathy's. Following the meeting, we will all gather at Kathy's for ice cream. Daddy and Tim will accompany Paul to the tabernacle since someone will need to get Paul when the session is over and bring him to Kathy's for the party. Becky was going to contact Tiffany and Tera and let them know what was going on, too. There is a chance that Charles may bring a group of priests to conference from his Moscow ward so maybe they will be there, too.

John and Laurel are busy getting things ready for their wedding. We are so pleased with the prospects of adding Laurel to our family! She is really on the ball and special! This is a wonderful time of life with so many sweet events taking place! The letter we got from Mike yesterday left us both in awe. He is having some amazing opportunities. Yesterday Tim left for work at nine and I thought he would come home for lunch at noon. I kept waiting but he never came until 5:30. When he arrived home he said that the Mexicans that work with him fed him lunch. He has developed quite a friendship with them over the last few weeks. I couldn't help thinking about how much our family enjoys Father Lehi's descendants. They have been warm and generous with us.

Steph and Linds hosted Randy and Shauntel the last few days in California. I'm sure it's a treat for both couples.

Shauntel is attending a convention in Anaheim for the balance of this week.

April 7, 1997

[Mom] I wish I could be in Salt Lake today helping Grandpa and Grandma get moved in, but I know Kathy and Dick are there for them and I am grateful for that. I've spent the morning shopping for groceries and preparing food for tomorrow's annual "Senior Citizen's Dinner" sponsored by the Aaronic Priesthood/YW. There are always a lot of last minute details.

Tonight is our extended Larsen FHE and the last time we'll be together before Grandpa and Grandma Larsen leave. They will be leaving tomorrow, pulling their fifth wheel trailer with the pick-up and driving their car. They have had so many details to take care of! Daddy dropped by last Friday to wish Grandpa a happy birthday and see how he was feeling. His injury is healing nicely. We are going to miss them!

Last weekend we drove to Salt Lake, helped clean Grandpa and Grandma's new condo, visited with family, and enjoyed conference. Daddy, Paul and Tim attended the priesthood session in the tabernacle since Paul was in the choir and so they spent most of Saturday afternoon on temple square, listening to conference and standing in line.

Usually there is beautiful spring weather for conference, but Saturday a snow storm settled in and it was cold and miserable. One of Mike's Mexican friends had arranged to meet Daddy at the Seagull monument and they were able to have a good visit about what is happening with "Mighty Mike, the Mexico Missionary." It was a timely visit for us since we had some shoes we needed to get to Mike and postage for them was expensive.

Grandpa and Grandma Richards arrived in Salt Lake with Lisa on Friday. They were in good spirits and health despite the move and long trip from Richland. The moving van will be unloaded either today or tomorrow so they are staying with Kathy and Dick.

Their condo is lovely. It is set back off of a busy street, secluded and quiet. They have two bedrooms, two baths, a nice living room with a gas fireplace, a large dining area that they will use as a TV room, and a kitchen and large entry. The building itself houses 'eight condos on two floors with a large common entry and has a security system that protects the residents. It is not as large as they have been used to but it will give them a situation that will allow them freedom from yard and garden responsibilities and will put them close to temple and genealogical facilities.

Knowing Grandpa, I know that he will miss getting out and taking care of his yard. He is a farmer at heart and loves to work with his hands and watch things grow, so I know it's hard for him to accept that, for now, that part of his life is over. Thank goodness for eternity so that we can have time to enjoy doing those things that we come to love in this life.

I was pleasantly surprised at Grandpa's ability to get around with only a cane. When I saw him last April he was in a wheelchair.

It was a thrill for John, Steve, Dick, Don, Chet, Layne, and Grandpa to attend the priesthood session together Saturday night. Everyone arrived from Provo about 5:45, Don arrived from Richland, Layne and Leslie came over earlier in the afternoon, and we women (Grandma Richards, Lisa, Kathy, Lesli, Becky, Bonnie, Laurel, Tiffany and Tera, and me) all enjoyed visiting while the men attended conference. Then we had our traditional ice cream party.

Although Daddy, Paul, and Tim were a little longer getting home, they soon joined us. My only regret was that we hadn't brought

a camera to capture the evening. It was the first time Grandpa and Grandma met Chet and Laurel and the first time they had seen John since he left on his mission nearly four years ago. Wow! What a wonderful reunion!

Conference was so inspiring. I hope all of you were able to see some of the sessions. I was especially touched by the references to the sesquicentennial. We were enroute from Salt Lake to Blackfoot so we missed the visual part of the video presentation by the First Presidency on Sunday morning, but we thoroughly enjoyed what we heard. We are led by marvelous men and women!

In the Sunday afternoon session, the person who gave one of the prayers said that the presence of many of our pioneer ancestors had been felt during the conference. That was a thrilling thought! I have thought so much about my own grandparents and great grandparents and their sacrifices for the gospel. I'm sure they look down on those of us who enjoy living in this day and age and hope that we will live worthy of all they sacrificed for.

While we were at Kathy's Saturday night, John and Laurel and I had some time to go over wedding plans. I am so impressed with Laurel and her ability to get things done. She had a carefully prepared list of things to talk about, decisions to make, and plans to confirm. She is such a joy to be around!

[Dad] Conference was a thrill for me also. It was especially nice to be able to be on Temple Square and in the tabernacle for part of it. Tim had never been in the tabernacle before and it was fun to be there with him, standing up and picking out General Authorities before the Priesthood session began. I was surprised how many Tim was able to identify. We were thrilled with the music and enjoyed watching the Ricks College combined men's choirs, and especially Paul, as they sang.

Last week was spent preparing, printing, and posting the paper, The Trails. Sometimes, it seems like it should be called The Trials for me. Not really, but it is always a relief to have it completed and in the mail for another quarter.

This week I had a presentation in staff meeting, a fellow from the regional office coming in for appointments with people that I have been lining up, a trip to SLC to help Sue's folks and to attend a gala reception for 1910 Society and James E. West Fellows for the Scouts in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building. Never a dull moment it seems.

April 14, 1997

[Mom] The wind is howling outside and my plans to spend some time in my flower bed have been put aside for another day. Last Saturday was a warm and windless spring day and I spent part of the day transplanting iris and bishop's weed. It felt good to be outside in the sunshine. I had hopes that I could continue today but it's too blustering and cold.

This Friday I'm speaking at the Middle School for their annual Girls' Day and I'm worrying about my voice holding out. It's been nearly a month since I had my bad cold and laryngitis, but I'm struggling, especially if I talk for prolonged periods or get out in the cold wind.

This afternoon we are going to attend a piano recital in Rexburg for Paul. This is his teacher's final exam for her students for the semester. Paul practiced his number while he was here two weeks ago for spring break and it was enjoyable. I'm grateful that we live close enough to share these events with him.

When I got home from Jr. Miss Saturday night Daddy informed me that we were going to have some midnight visitors--Paul and Alison. They were going to stop in and visit for a few minutes while Merritt

returned his date to the Pingree area and then they would ride back to Rexburg. It was fun to have them drop in.

Daddy hadn't met Alison before and she had never been here to our home so it was really nice to have them come. I was glad we had some ice cream on hand. Alison will be leaving for Europe the 26th of this month for a study abroad experience. She will only be gone for about a month so we'll be seeing more of her as the summer progresses.

Chet and Becky have a busy time ahead of them as they prepare for Chet's move to Idaho and Becky's move to an apartment for a few weeks until her teaching contract is completed. John is moving into the apartment that he and Laurel will have following the wedding.

We were in Provo Thursday night for a few hours and we were able to see it. It is a spacious, lovely apartment and is only about a block from the MTC. It was the one Becky and Chet had lined up for themselves last year but there were some complications with the occupant and it wasn't vacated in time for them to get it.

We are looking forward to enjoying another BYU graduation this year with Chet and Becky. Our plan for now is to leave Thursday morning (hanging clothes bag and all) and arrive at John's new apartment, change clothes, and attend the four o'clock commencement with Becky and Chet. We will be available after that to help move anyone that needs help. We will spend the night at John's and attend Chet's 10:30 convocation on Friday. We may stop by Grandpa and Grandma's on the return trip. John will be catching a 4:30 flight out of Salt Lake on Friday to spend a few days with Laurel so that may figure into our plans, too. Laurel is leaving on the 21st for Ohio.

The big news this past week is that Tim made Chamber Singers. He was pleasantly surprised although I felt pretty certain that he would. There were only three bass spots open this year but Mr. Grayson appreciated Tim in a cappella this past year and commented several times that Tim was carrying the bass section alone. I think he is excited about it (except for the cost of the outfit).

Just to give you an idea of the commitment Tim is making right now to his basketball activities: Following the regular season, Coach Combs has an early morning basketball class at 6:45 five times a week. If the boys are serious about playing school ball, they are expected to attend that class. They will play ball all summer, attending tournaments throughout the area. This summer the coach expects them to attend a week-long camp in Montana ($250) and further hone their skills. Sometimes I've wondered if it is worth it but Tim is going to give it his best shot. He is working to earn his own way and I admire his spunk.

Last week the coach called him in and told him that he wanted him to play more aggressively or he wouldn't be on the team next year. It was a hard pill for Tim to swallow considering his stats last year. He had a long visit with his dad and expressed his concerns regarding the brand of ball the coach expects from the boys (lots of physical, aggressive play) and Daddy reassured him that he should play his best, keep honing his skills, and not feel pressured. He hoped his siblings wouldn't be disappointed if he wasn't on the team and we assured him that whatever happened, we could live with it. Tim pushes himself hard and he has never been one to need a push from anyone.

SaraKay has a piano recital this Saturday. She enjoys her lessons and usually gets in her practice time. I'm the one struggling. Each evening before I go to bed I take a pill that helps me relax. In the morning I am still pretty dozy and sitting on the piano bench with SaraKay is more than I can

handle. I have learned to take her through her tough pieces while I'm mildly awake and then I lie in Daddy's big chair and have her play through her other pieces, pretending to close my eyes and listen intently. Most of the time, I'm dozing off, but we get through the half hour and she continues to progress.

The other night she was watching "Homeward Bound". She asked me to come watch it with her and it was close to the end when I joined her. We got to one part and she said, "This is the sad part where I always cry." Sure enough, once the dog started running towards the little boy, Sara Kay started to cry and so did I. Oh, boy. Another boob in the family! I thought it was pretty remarkable, though, that she was that sensitive to the events in the video. She is growing and continues to delight and amaze us with her abilities. She and Tim are great friends and I'm always grateful that they have each other and that we have them! I am not looking forward to the day we graduate another senior.

Some of you have asked about my YW work. It is the "best of times" and the "worst of times." As a presidency we seem to be getting the logistics right, but I've come to know that the "ministering" end of it is the challenge. I still don't have an advisor so I'm handling it myself and I just gained another Laurel this week bringing the total to 14. The bishop tells me that the girls express appreciation for me in their interviews with him, but a lot of weeks come and go without me feeling like they care. I know that isn't true but it's hard to keep going when some of them appear so distant. I'm recommitting myself to praying harder and working with the girls more on an individual basis, especially those who are sporadic in their attendance.

The other day I was rushing about frantically trying to gather together things for the big "Senior Citizens" dinner and the thought came to me that the challenges of this day and age are different from those of yesteryear, but the sheer pace of things and demands of our callings require us to give our best. Maybe "Faith in Every Footstep" doesn't seem too applicable to me today, but maybe "Devotion in Every Dizzying Day" fits how I feel. I am grateful for the chance to serve and most of the time I feel that the Lord is pleased with my offering.

Yesterday Daddy sang a solo "I Walked Today Where Jesus Walked" in sacrament meeting. He had had such a busy week that it wasn't until Friday night that he had a chance to find some music and run through it. I was nervous for him knowing how frightening it is for me to sing anything in front of an audience. When Daddy got up to sing he just stood there so relaxed and at one point even put his hand in his pocket and kept right on singing as if he was totally at ease. He did beautifully! He had so many compliments throughout the day! He has a beautiful solo voice and just doesn't get opportunities to perform. I was proud of him and I think he was pleased with how it went.

I told him last night that church activity forces us to develop our talents and stretch! How grateful I am for the many opportunities I have had to give service and grow in the process. I'm sure all of you feel the same.

Jonie called and mentioned that a missionary couple from Rexburg have moved in across the street from her and she is getting acquainted with them. Good. Hopefully they will rekindle her desire to attend church. Jonie would be invaluable with her musical abilities and understanding of the gospel.

Grandpa and Grandma Larsen are nearly ready to leave for Tempe after their week in the MTC. What an exciting adventure for them! We are anxious to hear how they

liked their training and what their situation is like in Tempe.

When I called Shauntel last night she mentioned both sets of grandparents and how different it is to have them both making major moves and transitions right now. It is a little different and I'm sure they would appreciate your prayers. We are proud of them and the lives they lead. The other day I was in Wal-Mart and I saw this woman who was probably in her sixties but she had on the strangest garb, wore a crazy hair-do and make-up that was out of this world! I think she was trying to look young but she really looked bizarre. I felt sorry that she couldn't appreciate her stage of life, find meaningful activities that would bring satisfaction, and relax a little about being herself. I'm grateful that our grandparents are an example of stability, goodness, and wisdom and that we can look to them for patterns for our own lives. Isn't the gospel great!

[Dad] We just got back from Rexburg and Paul's recital. It was wonderful to be there! He is taking lessons this semester from a Marilyn Gee. She and her husband were at Ricks the same time we were. In fact, Marilyn was Linnea Hammond's roommate while she was still Linnea Hall.

Paul was in the middle of the program and played Sonatina in D Major by Clementi. He did an excellent job and dazzled us with the rapid digitation he thrust upon the keyboard. It was great to see such fine young people developing their talents and willing to share them--although most of them were almost too frightened to play with ease.

After the recital we kept the tradition and went for ice cream. Paul wanted a waffle cone because all the time working in Kesler's he wanted one and never did get one. That is one major difference between Paul and his dad--I would have had one every day!

I was grateful for the opportunity to sing in Church. It is only the second time in my life when I've sung a solo. The other time was when our stake put on the Messiah and I sang one of the bass solo's with Mother to accompany me. I just prayed that I would do well enough to help bring the Spirit to the meeting rather than drive it away.

As Sue wrote about her pace and all the things she has been doing I was reminded of something I heard. Someone made a study regarding changes from 1900 to 1960--the number of decisions, number of moves, the number of people we meet, the speed, the intensity of sound, air quality, and so on. They determined that things had increased 50 times in those 60 years and have more than doubled since then. It is little wonder that we feel stress. In fact, 92% of the employees surveyed felt that they were under more stress than they could comfortably handle.

Some of the techniques for handling stress are: 1) take a walking break, 2) have a walking meeting instead of a sit down one-on-one; 3) engage in thinking time--schedule it every day if you have to, 4) disengage--take a vacation, indulge a hobby, 5) listen to the right kind of music, 6) diet--eat right with complex carbohydrates (fruits, vegetables, grains) as a mainstay in your diet instead of refined carbohydrates (white flour, candy, junk food, ice cream (oops, I didn't say that), 7) regular exercise, 9) ATTITUDE (you knew I would eventually say it is all in your head didn't you!).

The biggest part of attitude is determining what things you have control over and making the changes necessary. Then determine the things over which you have no control and work with them with an attitude of acceptance or adapting. Many of the things we get stressed about never happen, but the body can't tell the difference between events that are real and those that are vividly imagined, so it

responds with the fight or flight stress response to either event.

Remember Mark Twain's classic statement: *"In my life I have experienced many terrible things, a few of which actually happened."*

Let me close with another quote for you to think about. *"Selection--selection--selection!*

This is the law of life. We cannot join everything; therefore we must select. We cannot participate in every good cause; therefore we must select. We cannot give to everything; therefore we must select. We cannot read everything; therefore we must select. Whatever one's goal may be, it can be achieved only by the sacrifice of the lesser."

You must choose constantly. A definite sense of mission and goals is imperative in those selections. With the Spirit as your guide you will be able to discern which choices are in harmony with your eternal purposes. May the Lord continue to bless each of you in your righteous endeavors. I love you! DAD

April 28, 1997

[Mom]The first part of the week was a marathon for us as we prepared for the VIP reception that was to be a part of the annual Scout Recognition Night. For the first time ever, the council's Silver Beaver recipients were going to be honored during a ceremony held in the Snake River Auditorium instead of the regular Pocatello/Rexburg banquets of former years.

In order to make it a special occasion, the council decided to host a buffet for the Silver Beaver's and spouses and also include those individuals who have made a substantial financial contribution to the council. This latter group are the ones Daddy works with and so Kim (the new Scout Exec) put him in charge of the buffet. At first he priced things from a caterer but found it to be so exorbitant that he approached me about the possibility of the two of us figuring it out and purchasing what we would need. I immediately turned to my neighbor, Melanie, and she helped me come up with total cups, pounds, slices, etc. for the event. Tuesday we went to Sam's and purchased most of the items and Wednesday we picked up ice, fruit, vegetables, and the rest of the supplies.

Wednesday afternoon, Daddy, Tim, SaraKay and I headed for the high school with a van loaded with five coolers, tablecloths, serving bowls and trays, and sundry other items. It was quite a job carrying all the things from the van to the music room at the far end of the building but with Tim's able assistance we got things unloaded and began fixing the cheese and meat trays, putting out chairs, and preparing for the 6:30 deadline. At 6:25 everything was ready and at 6:30 150 people arrived and began going through the line. If some of the other Scouting professional's wives hadn't seen the need and offered to help, I wouldn't have survived. Daddy was so involved with other things that he wasn't available to help so it was quite a task keeping drinks poured, trays filled, crackers replenished, and greet the guests all at the same time. At 7:00 the program in the auditorium began and the place cleared as quickly as it had filled.

Tim and SaraKay came back to help and we began picking up and putting away the leftovers. Again we hauled everything out to the van, drove home and unloaded into the kitchen. It took me until after 10 to restore order. Daddy arrived home exhausted from the evening. We were both grateful for the success of the event but admitted that another year we would make some changes.

Thursday morning we left about eight for Salt Lake. We took the van because we were going to bring the U-Haul back for

Becky and Chet on Friday. When we got to the Malad pass, we took the hill about 45 miles per hour and we both hoped we would make it with the U-Haul on our way back. When we got to Salt Lake, the van was struggling and Daddy commented that he hoped we didn't have problems with it on the return trip. We made it to Grandpa and Grandma's and were able to help them with a few odd jobs and picture hanging. They are almost completely moved in now and it is starting to feel like home. It is so nice to drop in and visit with them whenever we get in the area. Tiffany and a Zerker cousin dropped in on their way home from the "Y" and we had lunch with them.

By two o'clock we left for Provo. Our plan was to visit Becky at her school and meet her co-workers and students. They were at the nearby park playing ball so we visited there for a few minutes and then went to the school and saw where Becky has been working for the last year. Just seeing the setting helped us to appreciate what she has accomplished. I know that she has been such an asset and will be sorely missed!

By three we left Tim at the mall and drove to the Marriott Center for Commencement. It felt good to find our seats and settle in. The guest speaker was the Norwegian Supreme Court Chief Justice. He had a heavy accent and I had to really concentrate to understand what he was saying. He was complimentary of the school and also said some sweet words about the upcoming Olympics.

I tried to appreciate what was being said and sung, but my mind kept flitting back to the car and the unknowns regarding it. I was relieved when the program concluded and we made our way to Becky and Chet's place. Chet's family joined us there and we had a quick sandwich and proceeded to help them get things loaded into the U-Haul.

Looking at all their belongings in boxes, I wondered if they were going to be able to fit everything in the trailer, but with John packing and the rest carrying and supervising, it was soon loaded and ready to go. Becky and Chet still had a night ahead of them getting Becky moved to her single's apartment so we left to go to John's new apartment and help him get ready for his trip to Ohio the next day.

We stuffed wedding announcements, did his laundry, and talked through the upcoming wedding plans.

Chet's convocation was at 10:30 Friday so we had a while that morning to get ourselves situated and ready for the trip back to Blackfoot. It was fun to have Steve and Bonnie join us for convocation and then go to dinner afterwards.

It was about 2:30 when John left Provo following Steve and Bonnie who were going to drive his car from the airport and keep it for him while he visited Laurel. Originally, we had planned to drop him off on our way through Salt Lake, but we were grateful later that he decided to work it out with Steve rather than with us or he would have missed his flight.

When Chet and Becky found out that our van was having problems, they wondered about renting a vehicle to pull the U-Haul. It was finally decided that we would try out the van with them following us and that if we had problems, we would call Chet's dad on our cell phone and have him pick up a rental van and bring it to us.

We began our trek. Grandpa Richards had given me an office chair which we had loaded into the center part of the van and to that and the infamous buffet coolers and a few other items we had received in Salt Lake, we added a ficus tree and large live plant. SaraKay and I occupied the back seat. It made for a very funny looking situation, but a cozy one for us.

Once Steve asked me if we could feel the air conditioner and Tim commented that we probably didn't need it since we had lots of shade from the trees. We left Provo about three and headed home with a prayer in our hearts that we could travel without incident.

When we reached SLC we were in a traffic jam for a while. Just shortly after we pulled out of that, we noticed smoke pouring out of the left wheel well of the trailer. We moved over to the side of the road and stopped as quickly as we could and found that a bolt had come out of the spring shackle and was digging into the side of the tire. In fact; all four bolts had come out and it was just a matter of time and the whole wheel and spring assembly would have been flying out from under the trailer.

We were grateful that Becky and Chet had pulled over to the side of the road to wait for us to pass after getting through the traffic jam and that they were right there when the trouble began and not miles ahead wondering where we were. Fortunately, we had the cell phone and called the help number. After about an hour, a service man from U-Haul helped us. He tightened things up and we followed him off the freeway to a service center where more complete repairs could be made. So, with only losing about two hours we were on our way again. As long as we weren't impatient we got along fine for the rest of the trip home going between 35 mph and 70 mph, depending on the terrain. (Note from Dad: I wrote the above paragraph because I wasn't sure how much detail Mom would be able to give. Let me just add how delightful it was to be to another BYU graduation. That campus inspires me every time I see it. Everything that I have experienced there is of such high quality and inspirational.)

[Mom again] The slow ride home gave Sara Kay and me some quiet time and we sang songs, played the color game, and some card games. It's interesting how certain situations give us a new perspective on an old scene. Every time we came to a hill, the car would start shifting down and I would feel myself mentally tugging to accommodate the incline and pray us over. I never realized there were so many hills between here and Provo!

I kept thinking how much we had to be grateful for and how difficult it could have been if the trouble had happened anywhere else. As we were driving between Provo and the point of the mountain, a large semi passed us and as it did, it honked. Daddy sensed that we should pull over and check things out. When he and Tim checked the trailer, the back-sliding door had come unlatched and was starting to open. They scoured the side of the road and located a small piece of wire and secured the latch and we continued on.

Becky and Chet were not directly behind us and so we could have lost part of our load along the freeway and not even realized it until we were in a real mess. Anyway, as we were riding home, I had some time to think about the Lord's blessings and rejoice that another family member had graduated, that a job had been found, that the van was running, and life was good.

I thought about other moves that we have experienced as a family: Steph and Linds' traveling from California to Indiana battling closed exits and roads because of the flooding that year; Shauntel and Randy arriving in Iowa to find their student housing flooded; David and Andrea's trip to Arizona with her parents close behind to help them when their muffler nearly started the car on fire; and Jonie leaving for Minnesota all alone with her Nissan loaded to the limit with all her belongings. Moving is always a marathon no matter how prepared you are. We were glad to help Becky and Chet get this one behind them.

Saturday they left for Idaho Falls and hunted for housing. About eleven I commented to Daddy that I wished they would call and tell us that they had found a place, but Daddy felt that it was a long shot that they would find an apartment ready for occupancy. By 3 o'clock they called and we headed to Idaho Falls with the U-Haul. They found a cute house in a nice area of town and it was clean and ready for them to move in. We were so grateful that Becky was here for the weekend and they could get moved in before returning to Provo. Chet is spending nights here with us until some furniture can be delivered and the water and other utilities hooked up. We have thoroughly enjoyed having him around!

Friday night as we were enroute home we realized that we had a son at Ricks College who needed to be moved home, too, and in the rush of everything, we had completely forgotten about him. He had been so independent this year since several of his roommates have cars and we have seldom made the trip to Rexburg. We knew that he surely couldn't move home in a friend's car.

As we pulled into the driveway, we saw a pickup backed into the garage and there was Paul and the Turpin's unloading his stuff. We so appreciated them taking care of Paul for us! Within 12 hours of being home, he had secured employment for the next two weeks. By Sunday morning he had a job offer for the summer and Monday morning another business called and asked him to come for an interview! It's nice to be wanted.

It's going to be a treat for us to have him around this summer since he was gone so much last year. He'll submit his mission papers the end of this month.

There are two missionary letters in today's mailing; one from our Arizona missionaries and one from Mike. What a joy to get those letters! Included in Mike's envelope was a sweet letter that we were to forward to Cousin Ryan. We took the liberty and read it before sending it on to Ryan and it was a letter of love and encouragement to Ryan as he begins his time in the Dominican Republic. I thought it was very thoughtful of Mike to sense how difficult these first few months can be.

I spoke in church Sunday and expressed some thoughts about Mike. It was pretty hard to do without losing it emotionally. We are so proud of all our missionaries, past and present, including both sets of grandparents!

We've got a dinner-date tonight for the Laurels and it's going to take some time to pull it together. We love and pray for your welfare and happiness. We were pleased to hear that Shauntel has been called as YW President in her ward. What a great role model for those sweet YW she works with!

May 5, 1997

[Mom] It's Grandpa and Grandma's anniversary today and I called them to wish them well. Grandma's brother Don had taken them to the temple last week and they had also discovered that my cousin Bob who helped create the PAF program, just lives a couple blocks from them and has offered to help them with their genealogy. I could tell that Grandma was excited about that.

It's been 54 years ago that they were married in the Salt Lake Temple. When we were there a week ago we hung some family pictures and commented about the changes in the family since the 50th Anniversary party. Grandma said that there had been 15 great-grandchildren added since then!

Last week was a lot more relaxed than the previous had been and we took time to do some yard work. Each day I spend time taking care of wedding details. May is here and in two weeks we will be marrying off

#six child. It feels good to add another member to our family and see the goodness and strength they bring.

Last Saturday Daddy and Tim spent most of the afternoon erecting a fence to enclose an area for a windbreak. We rent the pasture to a family from Riverside and we were afraid that their horses would eat the seedlings along with the pasture grass. Hopefully this will enable us to get the trees growing. It was satisfying to watch Daddy and Tim work together on the project and to see it successfully completed before nightfall.

Daddy's abilities at building and fixing have been such an asset over the years. I think there is a lot of satisfaction in knowing how to do things with your hands. So much emphasis is put on the mind in society today, but the ability to tinker and construct and fix things is certainly a wonderful skill to have.

We enjoy having Paul home although he is working 12-hour days and gone a lot. We are grateful for his health and strength and for the job opportunities he's had.

Sunday evening he went to a fireside and didn't get home until about 11:00. When we questioned him, he said that he, Bret, Merritt, and Micah had been at Merritt's house visiting about their upcoming missions. I could tell that he was feeling nostalgic about everyone being gone while he has the entire summer to wait. It's a time of high's and low's with a lot of melancholy moments. We've watched all our missionaries go through it. Grandma Richards said, "It's nice to finally get on your mission and start counting the time until you return instead of counting the time until you leave." Hang on, Paul.

Sunday was fast day and the highlight of the day for me was when Tim bore his testimony. Several weeks ago in FHE we were talking about the first vision and Tim expressed that he hadn't had a strong confirmation of the truthfulness of the gospel yet. In his testimony Sunday he told of being approached by a co-worker and questioned about the Church. He said that as he talked through things, he realized that he did know the gospel was true. He expressed thanks for his priesthood leaders and all they did to help the boys have good experiences during these important years.

Becky and Chet came to visit for a couple of hours Saturday evening and it was fun to sit in the lawn swing and chat. It was a pleasant spring evening and so fun to have them here. What a treat to have them living close.

[Dad] Last night we had our Larsen FHE at Gary's. It was a fun and relaxing time. We ate, of course, and then played kick-ball in their back yard. It's the kind of game that everyone can play regardless of age and abilities and not feel inadequate.

I had a major presentation to make to the Eastern Idaho Association of Life Underwriters at the Continuing Education symposium yesterday about Charitable Giving. It was rewarding to be able to associate with a lot of people that had been friends for many years in the life insurance business. We met at the Sandpiper in Idaho Falls and I couldn't help reminiscing about when we moved there as an association while I was on the Board. I remembered making the flag pole and stand that they were still using. I had quite a few compliments on my presentation.

Last week I put together a mailing about our campaign this month for James E. West Fellows--contributors of $1,000 or more to the council endowment fund. I have been developing a theme of "Put a log on the fire--keep the spirit of Scouting burning." It was satisfying to engineer the letter, contents and mailing list to accomplish our goals. We have two phone-a-thon nights this week and next to follow up with the

recipients of the letters. Hopefully we will be able to reach our goal of 20 new James E. West Fellows this month.

Friday I was also part of a major presentation at an estate planning day sponsored by Easter Idaho Technical College in Idaho Falls. It was the first time I had ever been on that campus and I was quite favorably impressed. There certainly are a lot of good causes out there that are worthy of support. It's a good thing that different people are inspired and touched by different causes.

I guess Dad and Alva Lu had to buy a condo in AZ, because they couldn't find a satisfactory long-term place to park their trailer. We sure think of them a lot; they are always in our prayers.

Mike, we are proud of you and the work you are doing. It may not seem like it to you, but we can see the growth you have experienced this past year.

I got a call last night from Jay Miller of Miller's Honey wondering if any of my kids were available for full-time work right away. He said that our previous boys that worked for him (Steve & Dave) had done such a good job and he knew we have good, hard working children. It was nice to know that we have left that kind of impression and I thought that Steve & Dave would like to know that they are still remembered there.

Well, I had better sign off and get to work. It is such a beautiful day I wish I could just work in the yard instead of in an office today. Our place looks so nice right now. Last week we went to Aberdeen to Ray Duffin's and got some Austree starts. After seeing the situation where they are growing there, we decided we couldn't put them along the fence at the back of our yard, we needed much more room. So, Tim and I erected a fence 20' into the pasture, paralleling our back fence, so we could have a corridor there for them to grow.

May 19, 1997

[Mom] It's Monday and the count-down here in Moreland begins. I say here in Moreland because I know there are two people in Provo who have been counting down for several weeks now.

Yesterday at church the Watsons mentioned that they had been at the Salt Lake Temple on Saturday for a wedding and that they had seen John and Laurel and David and Lucas Hammond. When I called John Sunday night to finalize more plans, I told him about Watson's surprise at seeing him in the temple with Laurel. He said that he was there for his roommate's wedding and that it was fun to be an observer and envision what it would be like at his own wedding this week. He said that when the ceremony was over, he and Laurel wanted to stand up and say, "How about doing us now?" but they decided that they had better wait. I assured him that his choice had been a wise one considering all the preparations that had been made.

We are excited and about ready for the wedding day and anxious to be in the temple with family and friends. We'll miss those who can't be with us. I know that you will be thinking about us and wishing John and Laurel the best! It will be the first time we haven't had Grandpa and Grandma Larsen with us at a wedding, but on the other hand, we're grateful that my parents can attend.

When we got Christian Gentry's graduation announcement, we noticed that his graduation is on the same day as the wedding. I guess that is a good reason for Jeanie to miss the wedding. She is always good to show support.

We had another short but sweet visit from Steve and Bonnie last Friday and Saturday.

Bonnie and Rachel stayed in Idaho Falls Friday evening and attended a shower for Joel's fiance' and Steve and Nathan stayed

here with us. We put Steve to work helping us with projects around the house and yard.

When Shaunte! called last night, she said, "Ask me how my day went." So I said, "How did your day go?" She proceeded to tell me about some prowlers that they had outside their bedroom window at 2 a.m. and then about a major hail storm that hit Sunday afternoon which broke windows, dented cars, and wreaked havoc on the town. The hailstones were the size of golf balls! When Randy turned on the TV to find out the extent of the damage, there were tornado warnings and people were told to get into their basements. Later that day there were flash flood warnings issued. Wow! What an exciting Sunday. All we did was go to our meetings and have chicken for dinner.

Tonight for home evening we did yard work. Things are looking nice. Last Friday Bob Jenks came over with his spray rig and sprayed the dandelions. He wouldn't take any money for it but told Tim earlier that a batch of cookies and ice cream would be payment enough. I spent part of the afternoon making cookies and he showed up about 5:30 to spray. It took nearly two hours with several of us helping by protecting the trees and flowers as he went around the yard. He said that it would take about 6 hours to get a good kill. Although it was beautiful weather as he was spraying, within a couple hours of finishing, the weather changed and dark clouds moved in and dumped rain for nearly three hours. I was disappointed that all our work had been for naught, but despite the rain, we did get some results and the lawn looks a lot better.

At supper tonight I gave instructions about everyone being careful to keep things clean so that things would be nice for the McAllister's arrival on Thursday. Tim replied, "For the last 15 years we have been having to be on our best behavior every time we have some special occasion. I'm tired of pretending. Why can't we just be our normal selves!

Of course, then Paul chimed in with some crazy remark and the conversation went downhill from there. It has been fun having Paul here to liven things up a bit, but I told him today that he has got to quit laughing at Tim and encouraging his theatrics.

Sunday Paul had his interview with the bishop and brought home his missionary papers. We spent part of Sunday filling out forms. He asked Dad and I questions as he filled them out and when he was through he brought the completed copy for me to preview. I couldn't help thinking, "Are we ready for this!"

[Dad] This past week was filled with the James E. West campaign and phone-a-thon. We had quite a bit of success and we have surpassed my goal of 20 and are still working on follow-up with those who have not responded.

I met with Ron Butler, the Administrator for Columbia Regional Medical Center in Idaho Falls in regards to a funding request. I brought Dave into the conversation with his MHSA from Arizona State. Ron has been in Idaho for five years after spending 20 years with various hospitals in Texas and Louisiana. He knew the Plano and Dallas area well. He is LDS and his eldest son just left for a mission in Nicaragua.

Sunday was hectic, though not nearly as exciting as Shaunnie's day. We had our regular meetings and lessons to teach and in addition Sue and the Fife's and I sang a special number for Matt Gardner's farewell. It was a special arrangement of "Jesus Once Was a Little Child," and "I Am a Child of God" written in four parts. It was fun to perform with them! We then had choir practice, stake choir practice for a Sesquicentennial celebration coming up, ward inservice, and a Trek meeting.

We are looking forward to the festivities this week, all except for the wearing of the tuxedo. We look forward to being in the temple with some of you and our thoughts will be with those of you who will be excluded because of distance. Just think, in the hereafter, there won't be a problem in getting together for special family events!

[Dad] This Sunday we wrangled a little time to go to Merritt Van Orden's farewell. There was a huge crowd and it was a sweet meeting. Merritt gave such an outstanding talk-- he sounded more like a returning missionary. It's going to be hard for Paul to adjust to life without Merritt, they have been so close for years. Many of his friends are leaving or have already gone on their missions. He is getting ready for his interview with the Bishop, physical exam, dental exam, and getting his papers sent in. September is coming awfully fast. We have so enjoyed having him around!

Saturday, we had a very productive day in the yard and garden. Things are really looking good around here. The grass is green, the trees are growing, the apple trees are blossoming, and with Tim's mowing and trimming, our place looks sharp. We had to take our tiller to Ralph Jensen to get it running this year. I still had a rough time getting it going, but it made a difference to get the garden tilled and the weeds hauled off.

Steve and Bonnie and kids arrived about 1:00 on Saturday and we had a delightful visit with them. It is fun to see Rachel and Nathan growing so fast--they are beautiful children. It is a good thing Bonnie brought some beauty genes into the pool with their marriage. It was fun watching Nathan eat spaghetti with both hands and putting his feet on the table because he was so relaxed and content. Rachel just plays and entertains herself; she hardly needed SaraKay to entertain her. But she sure doesn't care for Lucky--even when she is on the trampoline.

Last night we went to Idaho Falls to Sam's Club for wedding supplies. We coordinated with Chet so that we met him at 6:30 at his place and then went to Sam's together. Afterward we stopped at McDonalds for ice cream and to let SaraKay play. We had a great visit and are feeling comfortable with him. He is enjoying his job and thriving under the responsibility they are giving him at Melaleuca. Chet and Becky's little house is fixed up so cute and they have some nice furnishings. He looks really comfortable with his hammock in the back yard.

I appreciate the calls and remembrances for Mother's Day for your deserving mother. She is certainly the joy of my life and puts so much time and energy into loving and sustaining each of you.

May 12, 1997

[Mom] It's nearly suppertime and I'm just now getting to this letter. I had scheduled my V.T. for this morning so that I could get it taken care of before I got into the rush of next week. Last week I received a phone call from the district office requesting that I attend a teacher negotiations meeting. It made for a very interesting morning. It was especially enlightening to watch the negotiator bring up the different items in the contract that the teachers desired to be changed and watch the reactions of the administrators. I had never seen anything like this before and it was so educational! For the most part, I just watched and listened, asking a few questions for clarification. It's nice being a freshman board member because no one expects me to know much and I usually meet those expectations.

Following the negotiations, we had a meeting on personnel and it was 1:30 before I got home and into my day's work. I hate doing laundry at two in the afternoon

but I guess once in a while it's okay. It's still hard for me to sacrifice my time for this community service. That is probably magnified by the fact that there are so many other pressing concerns I have right now with YW and the upcoming wedding.

This board job would be fun if my time allowed me to get into it a little more. I have a constant stream of magazines, pamphlets, and letters and there just isn't time to read it all. I can appreciate the "paper war" that Daddy constantly fights with all the literature he receives with his job.

This past week was full of sweet interactions. Early in the week I received a call from Elder Larsen. He was calling to schedule a time for my Mother's Day missionary call. It was hard to do the scheduling and not visit. Mike was having a difficult time speaking English and several times I had to wait until he figured out what to say and how to say it. He kept slipping into Spanish. He even has an accent and sounds like the Mexicans. Mike said that he dreams and thinks in Spanish and that it is painful to try to switch back to English. I told him to practice before he called on Mother's Day so that we could talk nonstop. When he called yesterday we visited about how he feels about his first year in the field. He is still struggling with feelings of inadequacy; that is pretty normal and something we all deal with in various situations.

I appreciated each of you touching base with me this past week. It is such a joy knowing that you are living the gospel!

Some of you will remember a quote I had on a wooden plaque on the wall. *"I have no greater joy than to know that my children walk in truth."* That is exactly how I feel and I recognize that the peace and contentment I am enjoying during this season of my life is due in large part to the obedience and goodness of each of you children. I know that you face challenges in your individual situations, but I have a lot of confidence in your abilities to sort things out and make wise choices. I'm also grateful that you each are doing your best to be wise with your money. The Lord has really blessed us all!

May 26, 1997

[Mom] I have been thinking all day about writing this letter, but I have been too tired to face it. Sometimes the hardest times to write are the weeks when so much of consequence has transpired that it is difficult to find the time and words to adequately relate the events and feelings.

First, let me comment on Thursday. We had worked hard to have the house and yard looking nice for the McAllister's arrival. They got here about 3:00 pm and it was fun watching Laurel with her mother and two sisters as she showed them her dress and veil and they began planning how to fix her hair for the reception that night. It didn't really dawn on me until then that the wedding preparations had, for the most part, been Laurel's job and that she had been carrying much of the load herself. No wonder, amidst school and work, she was feeling so overwhelmed a few weeks ago!

The McAllister's were gracious guests and we all scurried around for the balance of the afternoon getting things ready. Daddy and I got some lilacs from Grandpa and Grandma Larsen's bush and arranged them in a large wicker basket in the cultural hall to compliment what the caterer had done. It worked well since Laurel's colors were butter yellow and periwinkle purple. When she and John first arrived from Provo, we went to the church to see the decorations and she commented on the beautiful lilacs on a nearby bush. I had already been thinking about using some for that night and knowing how much she loved them convinced me to move

ahead with it. It added a nice personal touch to the reception.

We appreciated the thoughtfulness of so many family and friends who attended the reception, helped serve and carry gifts, and mingle with those who attended. The rigors of the day took their toll and by 9:00 pm we were all tired. By the time we loaded gifts and leftover refreshments, watched John and Laurel open gifts, and made it to bed, it was almost midnight. I was so tired that we went to bed despite the mess in the kitchen from the earlier hurried dinner, the unloading of the van, and the day's activities.

By 6 a.m. everyone was up and we were en route to Utah. Paul and Tim rode with David Hammond who brought Becky home from Provo with him Thursday evening. John and Laurel left at five so that they could drive to Provo and then back to the temple after freshening up. Daddy and I and Becky and SaraKay went to the airport for Steph who was scheduled in at 9:27. That situation was almost our undoing as we waited and waited, being directed to different gates, and finally finding that her flight had unloaded already and Stephani had already proceeded to the baggage claim area thinking that we had probably gone to the temple without her.

It was very fortunate that she had worn a distinctive dress that I recognized and I spotted her at a distance standing on the curb searching the area for any sign of us. With less than an hour to get to the temple, Daddy navigated the heavy Salt Lake traffic and we arrived in time for the wedding.

What a sweet experience to be in the temple with so many family and friends! It was a wonderful ceremony and a thrill to see John so happy with his beautiful bride.

Several weeks ago Stephani offered to let us stay at the new home of her in-laws since they were touring Europe and no one was going to be there. We appreciated their thoughtfulness and accepted the offer. Following a photo session at the temple, Grandpa and Grandma Richards, Kathy and Dick, and our carload went to the Black's for a short rest and then to Magleby's for the wedding dinner. It was a joyful, noisy, and sometimes teary affair.

Laurel's younger brother, Grant, created a video of favorite photos of John and Laurel's growing up years and put it to music and it set the stage for brief comments from the parents and bride and groom.

The open house that night was at John's bishop's beautiful home and Bishop Sowell and his wife were so very gracious and sweet in welcoming the wedding guests. It was a unique opportunity for us to meet many of John's ward members, roommates, co-workers, MTC acquaintances, and friends. I was amazed at how many associates of the McAllisters who had moved from Cincinnati to Utah in the past few years came. It was satisfying to see the outpouring of love and support from so many.

By the time the evening was over, we were exhausted but grateful. We enjoyed our short stay at Black's and the chance to share some one-on-one time with Stephani that evening after the party was over. She was able to fill us in on what was happening with their home purchase and even showed us the house plans. We appreciate Linds' willingness to handle the home front in her absence.

Saturday we dropped in for a short visit with Grandpa and Grandma Richards and had lunch with them. We laughed about funny stories until we nearly cried. It felt good to have the stress of the wedding behind us!

Becky and Paul drove home Friday night in a rainstorm and arrived about 1 a.m. When we got home Saturday evening, there was a

note from Paul saying that he and Alison were double dating with Becky and Chet that evening and that he would be back about midnight.

The kitchen was cleaned, the dinner dishes done, and order restored. I assumed that Becky or Paul had done the work, but I later discovered that Melanie Hanni had seen the mess when she came to get the building key to return for us, and she had done all the dishes and put things back in place. What a wonderful neighbor!

All in all, we felt pleased with the weekend and grateful for our success and safety. Last night John called and said that they had been opening gifts and getting things situated in their cute apartment. They spent a short honeymoon at a cozy cabin at Sundance and appreciated everyone's efforts and sacrifices to make the wedding so memorable.

Becky and Chet dropped in Sunday evening and we enjoyed the chance to visit with them. Becky had a long weekend with Memorial Day and this next week is semester break and she will be able to be with Chet for another long weekend. The time is ticking away and soon they can get this separation behind them. It has been fun to have more family time the last few weeks with visits from Steve and Bonnie and Becky and Chet and to have Paul around again. It makes up for the empty feeling we get whenever we drive past the house on Taber Road and think about Grandpa and Grandma in Arizona.

[Dad] Of course the major event in our lives lately has been John's wedding. I'm sure Sue will give you a lot more detail, but I would like to outline some of my feelings about last weekend.

The McAllister family is a sweet, outgoing, faithful family and it was easy to be with them. We had a dinner for them Thursday evening before the reception. The reception was a success with many friends and family sharing the night with us.

The next day we left here at 6:00 a.m. to meet Stephani at the airport. Her flight from San Jose was delayed and we had a run around finding which gate she was coming to and when. We were lucky to find her just before she gave up on us and rented a car. We left the airport at 11:09 and were at the Mt. Timpanogos Temple by 11:45, just in time for the wedding at noon.

We then had a wedding dinner at Magelby's in Provo and a reception that night at John's Bishop's home on Osmond Drive. It was a beautiful, elegant home and the Sowell's were so gracious and generous. We were able to meet many of John's friends and associates in Provo.

All in all it was an extremely satisfying and rewarding time. Laurel's relatives flew in from Cincinnati, Pennsylvania, Arizona, California and all over. She is a favorite niece and cousin that everybody loves and all wanted to be there for her. She and John are so happy together--and they were so prepared for this. I found out that not only had she gone to England on her mission but her father had gone to the same mission I had--the Central British Mission under James A. Cullimore though he left in September of '62 and I arrived in March of '63. He also has a Welsh doll just like mine from Sister Entwhistle in Cardiff. He is a Scouter, been to Wood Badge, served on staff, and is a Silver Beaver. One other interesting link--he served as a stake missionary in California under President Carmack!

With all those coincidences, I am sure John and Laurel's marriage must have been made in heaven. We heard from them last night and they are enjoying putting away their gifts and making their apartment a home. I said this to John and echo it to each of you--there is no greater joy than having your children marry the right person,

in the right place, at the right time. This is certainly a rich and rewarding time in our lives. Times like this certainly re-emphasize the eternal value of family and the priceless gift of priesthood sealings. Love, DAD

June 2, 1997

Tonight we are hosting the Larsen home evening and we are going to have a Dutch oven chicken dinner and then go over to Grandpa and Grandma's for some yard work. Everyone is bringing hoes, trowels, clippers, and other equipment and we hope to clean up some flower beds, spray around the edges of the lawn, mow, and trim. It will be a fun evening if the weather will just cooperate with us. Lately we have had beautiful days but around 6 pm clouds roll in and we end up with rain. Since Becky isn't due back to Provo until Tuesday evening, she and Chet will be able to join with us. We're looking forward to it.

We spent most of Saturday at the high school, first for Snake River Daze, and then for three ballgames that Tim was playing in. Snake River was hosting the tournament so we didn't have far to travel. It still seems ridiculous to play basketball all winter and summer too, but with the new rules, the coaches can work with their teams all year and so to be competitive, they do. Tim gets really tired of the intensity but knows that he won't be playing come fall if he hasn't paid the price during the summer.

Following the games, Daddy did some cutting out around our trees. He has really worked hard to get the yard looking nice. This week I am going to get some corn and beans planted. We are trying to simplify a few things around the yard since we are running out of help from kids and Daddy's summers are busy with Wood Badge and other scouting responsibilities. We've both been weary since John and Laurel's wedding. It feels good to have it successfully completed. The gifts keep arriving, though and we've got another bunch to send back with Becky tomorrow.

Paul has been busy with work although today he only worked part time and has helped me with preparations for tonight. He finished up his dental and medical last week and had his interview yesterday with Bishop Godfrey. President Shipley agreed to put a note on Paul's application asking if he could enter the MTC by September 1 so that he could return in time to go to the fall semester of college. That would put Paul in the MTC on his 19th birthday. We're not sure they will be willing but at least we are giving it a try.

It was fun to get a letter from Shauntel. We love the phone calls but sometimes I have a hard time relaying the facts correctly in my letter. Let me give a short update on each household (except Shauntel's.)

Steph and Linds have officially bought a new home! After putting a pencil to it and figuring and visiting with all kinds of specialists in the real estate and housing industries, they opted to buy a home in a development in Hollister. It will mean a little longer commute for Lindsay, but they are all very excited to have a home to call their own. It is in the framing stage and move-in time will be towards the end of summer.

Jonie has a new part-time job as an accountant for a motel chain. She is working on a computer and hopes this job will be a spring-board for other positions. She and Jeff are still planning on coming for the August reunion.

Steve and Bonnie have been concerned this past week with Rachel. The doctor can't find a problem, but she has been running a high fever off and on for several days. Tomorrow she is going to Primary Children's Hospital for some tests on her heart. They suspect she may have a heart murmur. They were told that it wasn't

cause for alarm, but important to be aware of it. Our prayers are with them.

David and Andrea continue to enjoy the mission field and the many good friends they are making. Andrea said that Laurel and Angela are getting so grown up and the other morning they were celebrating because both girls made it through the night dry. Only parents of toddlers can appreciate what a memorable event that is!

Becky and Chet are trying to make the best of a tough situation. Luckily there have been some long weekends and some family events that have helped them see each other at least once a week. Becky spent some time today contacting administrators regarding employment but enrollment is down in many districts and many schools are just not hiring new people. Chet is enjoying his job and taking on some new responsibilities that keep him busy in Becky's absence.

The newlyweds are settled in. We are trying to find a time in the next two weeks before Daddy leaves for Wood Badge to go to Provo and see their apartment and gifts. John has a water bed that he needed stored until they finish school and have a bigger place. We offered to store it in Tim's room for a couple years for them so we needed to go to Provo and bring it home.

You can read Mike's exciting letter for yourself Now Mike can add to his other official designations (Elder, Bro, Mikey, Mighty Mike) the Invisible Man! Congratulations on your new calling, Mike.

With my encouragement, Paul has written some of his "doings".

Tim is in his final week of school. He is trying to find enough work to keep him going and busy for the summer. He is unsure just how much work Randy will have for him and so he is doing some checking with other possibilities. He has been a classroom assistant this last trimester for Carolyn Crawford and they have both had a wonderful experience with that. Tim has a natural ability with children and he has really been a delight in Carolyn's classroom. She has been very generous with her praise of him and his relationships with the children. (She also told me that he has the prettiest blue eyes!) .

Sara Kay is nearly a second-grader! She is growing into such a lovely little girl. She seems to do well in everything she tries although she was disappointed that she didn't win one of the mile-run awards. Tim still took her to McDonald's for a Happy Meal anyway so she was happy.

We are power washing the house today in preparation for painting it. Steve Reader is going to do it this time. We've decided it's time we hired a few things done around here instead of Daddy being the general contractor on every project.

[Paul] I thought I'd take a minute to inform you of my life at home. I write quite lengthy letters, so I decided it would be handy to label each paragraph with a word or two that describe its contents, thus enabling you to quickly scan the contents of the entire letter and skip to the parts that are of immediate concern to you.

My Job: For the first couple weeks of the summer I worked for Mike Driscoll. My work consisted of walking around on the platform of the spud planter and looking in the hopper to see if everything was running as it was supposed to be. If it wasn't running appropriately, I would reach in a door on the side of the hopper and discard or cut the big spuds that were causing the trouble.

At first it was scary because of several warning signs on the planter stating that I should not be doing what I was doing. But, I got used to it after a while and only had a few near-death experiences, which, in

retrospect, weren't all that bad. The worst part was that I looked like a total freak with my homemade anti-dust, anti-sunburn helmet so nobody that drove by ever came to talk with me.

Now I drive truck (I like to say "drive truck" with a hick accent) for the Snake River Live- stock Company operated by the Lake's. They are good employers, but they don't ever express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with my work so I don't know if they like me, and it's difficult to show them that I'm a good worker since all I do is drive a truck. I guess I could drive extra fast and have a very determined look on my face. My job consists of driving an automatic truck out to a field of, well, weeds that have been watered with really nutritious waste-water from local spud places like Nonpareil and Basic American Foods. A tractor gathers up the weeds, cutting them, and blowing them into a bin (actually the tractor just pulls the machine that does all that). When the bin is full, I pull up to the side of it and its contents are emptied into my truck. I then drive to the feed lot and empty my truck, after which I drive back out to the field of dreams, I mean weeds, and repeat the process. It is extremely dull, but it's lucrative, which is what I need right now.

Mission Preparation.

Today I completed my TB test, which was the final item in completing my physical. My physical went well, though I won't go into detail, and Dr. Hill said I could go anywhere in the world. The dentist said I'm getting better at brushing and, at the request of the mission papers, gave me some advice for maintaining good dental hygiene in adverse circumstances. He imparted the following wisdom: "Keep an eye on that tooth in the front." Keeping that advice in mind, I should be able to get through the two years without any dental problems. To complete my papers, all I need is an interview with the stake president.

Church Callings.

Several weeks ago I was called to be a Primary worker. This has been a great blessing in my life because, first, I felt very out of place in the gospel doctrine and elder's quorum classes; second, I really enjoy teaching my class and associating with my students; and third, I am learning much about the gospel and teaching methods. My class is one of the largest and most rowdy (hopefully that's not my fault) so now every Sunday is an adventure. It's challenging, but I like it.

I've also been called to be Tim's senior home teaching companion, which is awesome. We home teach the Harper's, a family consisting of a husband, wife, and six boys. Last month, Tim gave a lesson on prophets. He would give a description of a certain prophet and the boys would try to guess who it was. After one description, the youngest boy (3-4 yrs. old) guessed, "Keep the commandments." Tim and I both scolded him severely for his ignorant behavior.

Ray Carlson has asked me to be his helper in the Young Single Adult program of our stake. That has also been enjoyable.

Social Life.

Actually, I should label this paragraph, "Recluse Life." My closest friends are now in the MTC, so I am pretty much a "family man." SaraKay and Tim are my playmates. I do get out once in a while to see Alison. I went to dinner with her family last Friday and got along well with them, so all is well in the "love life" of Paul A. Larsen.

My Scary Run-in with Crazed Drunks in the Parking Lot of Kesler's Market Late Last Night.

Actually, I never did have a scary run-in with crazed drunks in the parking lot of Kesler's Market. I just thought it would be interesting to see if everybody skipped to

this section first since it sounds the most interesting.

Well, that's about it for the life of Paul Larsen in Blackfoot, Idaho.

[Dad] Last night worked out really well for the Larsen FHE. The Dutch ovens are so unpredictable that it took longer to cook than it should. But I really poured on the coals at the end to get things ready to eat by 6:45. We had a delightful meal of barbecued Dutch oven chicken breast, Dutch oven potatoes, fruit salad, tossed salad, fresh hot bread, cookies, brownies, and rhubarb crisp. We had such a fun time visiting together that it was hard to pull away and go do the work that we planned at Dad's. With about 20 of us we were able to do in an hour and a half what would have taken Dad and Alva Lu at least two days. I wish we would of taken the camera. But, the place looks wonderful and it was fun to work together and have the satisfaction of seeing the fruits of our labors. Then we came back to our place and had root beer floats. Whenever there were a few spare minutes Tim, Paul, Jacob, and Rick would shoot a few hoops.

June 9, 1997

[Mom] I know how a fish in a fishbowl feels. For the last week, Steve Reader and his hired help have been painting the exterior of our house. They have been on scaffolding and ladders scraping, caulking, painting and trimming. At first they covered all the windows with brown paper and we had a day of darkness. For the last several days they have been trimming and no matter which room I'm in (bathroom excepted) there is someone on a ladder just outside the window. I know they are not peering in, but I feel like I'm under surveillance.

The house is looking nicer than it has in a long time. For the last few years we've known that it needed to be painted but we just didn't feel like we could afford it. This year we knew we couldn't put it off any longer. The paint was peeling terribly and we were worried about damaging the underlying wood if we didn't get it protected with a good coat of paint.

Rachel went to Primary Children's Medical Center for heart tests on Tuesday. She had been listless and feverish for nearly two weeks, and despite frequent trips to the doctor, nothing was found to be wrong. When Bonnie took her to Primary Children's, the doctors didn't find a heart problem but diagnosed her with pneumonia. She was admitted to the hospital immediately and put on IV's. Steve and Bonnie traded off staying with her and by Thursday morning, she was released. Friday was Bonnie's brother's wedding and things worked out so that both Steve and Bonnie could attend the festivities.

SaraKay and I babysat on Friday and thoroughly enjoyed Nathan and Rachel. I kept asking myself how I did it when I had five preschoolers! Anyway, we managed to get through the day and we returned the children to Steve and Bonnie at the reception that night. I felt like they were very blessed to be able to attend the wedding when their week had been so difficult. It was interesting to note the differences in the temperaments of Nathan and Rachel. Rachel is mellow and quiet and content to curl up in your arms and cuddle; Nathan is out to explore the world and conquer. He was running everywhere, going a hundred miles an hour.

Last night was our stake's sesquicentennial concert. The Primary children had been asked to sing several songs and dress up in pioneer costumes. SaraKay was so excited about it that right after our block of meetings, she donned her costume and spent the rest of the afternoon playing outside in it.

By the time for the program at 7:00, she was a wreck. I brought her in to clean up and on the way to the bathroom, Daddy commented that she looked like she had just completed the trek across the plains! (Dads know just the right thing to say!) I will admit that she did look bedraggled with sweat rolling down her forehead, her hair in a matted mess under the bonnet, and some grass stains on her long skirt. It took some doing to get her presentable. But we did it, and she joined with other children in performing several numbers.

It occurred to me as they were singing how much a part of the saga the children were and I was touched deeply by the thought of their contributions to a cause they didn't understand, but supported.

Saturday we made a quick trip to Provo to deliver some gifts to John and Laurel and to see their new apartment. I promised John that we would try to get there before Daddy left for Wood Badge. John was given a waterbed several months ago but they are unable to use it in their apartment and he asked if we had room to store it. I proposed to him that Tim use it until he and Laurel needed it and he agreed. We left early Saturday morning, delivered gifts, visited the newlyweds, let Tim do some shopping for school clothes, and drove home. We had ward conference on Sunday so we knew that we had to make it a quick trip. It was fun to see their cute apartment and all their lovely gifts.

Both of them are registered for classes summer term and Laurel will be finished by December. She is working at the MTC and teaching at a local dance studio and John continues his work at the hospital. He's very fortunate to have good benefits with his job and some scholarship money to defray school expenses.

I had a learning experience last week. As a part of ward conference, my Laurel president was asked to give a short talk on meeting life's challenges through applying gospel teachings.

Tuesday night I reminded her of the assignment and asked if she needed any help. She responded that she didn't have any idea what to say. I spent some time giving her a few ideas and suggested that she could give an example of a prayer that she had seen answered. She responded, "I don't pray. I don't feel comfortable with it and haven't had private prayers for several years."

I was totally dumbfounded! How can anyone approach life without prayer and the Lord's blessing! Of course, I didn't say that to her but visited with her and got a commitment from her that she would pray each night for the remainder of the week and ask the Lord to help her know what to say.

Sunday as I was leaving the chapel following sacrament meeting I spotted her making a hasty exit. She had tears streaming down her face and she was headed for the restroom. I followed and inquired as to how she was doing. She related that she had been praying but no answer had come, just frustration and bewilderment. As she sat in sacrament meeting, she had listened attentively and the tears flowed. She didn't know what was going on but she was unnerved by this show of emotion that was so foreign to her. I suggested that the Spirit was working with her and that her prayers were in fact being answered. I encouraged her to relate the experience to the girls in our YW meeting and to encourage the other young women to include the Lord in their lives by having regular prayer. She agreed and did as I had suggested. It was a touching testimony and I know there were others who could identify with her experience. I was relieved to have it go so well. It made me realize that even though some of the lessons we teach in YW seem very basic to me, there are girls who are at that level

and I shouldn't tire of encouraging them to study, pray and attend their meetings.

Stephani related an experience to me that confirms the importance of listening to the Spirit. Last January she and I made reservations at two motels in Anaheim in anticipation of our trip there in April for my National School Boards Convention. She and Linds wanted to take the kids to Disneyland and so we made plans to meet in Anaheim, share a suite, and go together. The reservations were a little confusing because Daddy, Tim, SaraKay and I were arriving two days prior to Steph's family's arrival and yet we would stay in the same suite when they arrived on Sunday night. I had reservations for rooms for the two nights we would be there without the Bennions, but Steph made the suite reservations because she has a discount card and could get them cheaper. We had trouble getting them all at the same motel because things were so booked up and one of the desk clerks booked us in a room that we later found wasn't available. To complicate things, a month later we learned that we would be having a wedding so we canceled the reservations. I thought that I canceled all of them but a few weeks ago the charges for Steph's suite came through on her credit card. She has been trying to resolve it with the motel. It was made more difficult because she had never received confirmation of either the reservations or the cancellations.

As she visited with me about the various dates and my remembrances of the situation, she said the thing that made her the most upset about the whole situation was that she could remember on two separate occasions having the impression that she should call the motel and reaffirm that the reservations were canceled but she had shrugged it off Looking back, she realizes that it was the Spirit prompting her but the press of daily concerns crowded the impressions out and she didn't follow them.

I have had many of those kinds of experiences in my life. It is such an advantage to be tutored and instructed by the Holy Ghost. He prompts us in countless ways about a wide range of things, but many times we fail to listen and then live to regret it. Joseph Smith described having intimations regarding events and then seeing those things come to pass and learning to identify those intimations as whisperings of the Spirit.

It takes time to learn the language of the Spirit and yet it is satisfying to know the Spirit has whispered to you even if you have ignored it because it confirms that you are living worthy of his companionship and that he is striving with you.

June 16, 1997

[Dad] It doesn't seem possible, but Wood Badge time is here again. I will be leaving on Wednesday morning and won't be back again for 10 days. I'm excited and looking forward to the experience again--each time is a different experience because of the different personalities of the staff and the participants.

Sue is coming up on Friday with Nancy Williams for a special dinner and time together and then they are going to the Williams' cabin nearby on Henry's Lake to spend the night with their youngest daughters.

Thanks to each of you for touching base for Father's day--I so appreciate the cards, phone calls, and gifts I received from you. During the phone calls, I was able to bring most of you up to date with the flooding in Eastern Idaho and our involvement with relief efforts. Let me just quickly outline a few of the highlights.

The snowpack this winter ended up being about 180% of normal. In anticipation of the runoff, Palisades reservoir was drained earlier this spring. The water has been running at near flood levels but was

accumulating faster than it was flowing out. As Palisades reached its capacity last week, they began releasing the water at a faster rate in an attempt to equalize the inflow and outflow. As it became apparent that water flows were going to be approaching the level during the Teton Flood, everyone began making preparations--sandbagging around homes and businesses, building and reinforcing dikes and dams, moving out of basements, and so on.

Sue and the kids helped Monte and Carol Bowman move everything from their basement and elevate things upstairs as high as the water had been in their home when the Teton Dam broke. Everyone was watching the water levels rise and the river spread out. Evacuations were occurring in Roberts and Menan and the damage was compounded when a major dike broke. The Idaho Falls falls have just about disappeared because of the volume of water going over them.

The flooding and damage continued down the river--primarily to those who had built in the flood plain. All of the businesses in the Plaza were sandbagged around, and the water began to encroach on Albertsons. It got deep enough to run over I-15 just south of the Rose exit and the freeway had to be closed with all traffic routed through Shelley and down Highway 91 to the South Blackfoot exit. Becky can testify how terrible it was last Friday night when it took her two hours to go from Blackfoot to Shelley.

Friday night about midnight I received a call to help sandbag. I helped unload sandbags at the North end of the golf course where a large dike was erected after the Teton Flood to prevent flows into the Plaza area. It was leaking, so we were laying down plastic and sandbags to reinforce it. If it went, the river would have inflicted millions of dollar's worth of damage to homes and businesses in its path along its old bed before the freeway was built.

Sunday was John Davis's welcome home. Because of the flooding we only had sacrament meeting and we had that in the cultural hall so everyone could come in their work clothes and go right out after the meeting to help fill and distribute sandbags in the Groveland area. Paul, Tim, Chet and I helped for a couple hours with that effort.

And then, Sunday night about 12:30, I got another call to help. We were shoring up a sandbag dike that had been erected along the edge of an alfalfa field about straight south of Preti's along the river. We were wet and muddy as we worked in the dark moving and setting sandbags to help hold the river from further flooding of homes in that area. All in all it has been an interesting and we have felt so blessed that we have been virtually unaffected. The only real threat to us was from the Danskin Canal which runs right by our house, but they were forced to close off the canal on Saturday and we've breathed easier ever since.

[Mom] This past week has been one that will go down in the annals of Idaho history like the Teton Dam disaster of 20 years ago. When the Teton Dam broke we lived on the desert and never really felt the impact of it except through the media coverage and when Daddy volunteered to help with clean-up for a couple days in the Rexburg area. No one in our Moreland 2nd Ward was directly threatened by the water and so I never really appreciated the trauma that the people experienced. Being a part of it this time has given me a better understanding of the emotions and fears that attend this kind of situation.

Tuesday morning I was at my presidency meeting when it was mentioned that a state of emergency had been declared for Bingham County. There was to be a town meeting held at the civic center that

morning at 11:00 to inform the public of the upcoming problem of increased water flows in the Snake River and that residences effected during the Teton Dam would probably be in jeopardy now. That information sent panic through the Riverside area. Fear of not being able to get to town across the Snake River also created a sort of panic and immediately the grocery stores were filled with shoppers purchasing what they thought they would need in the days ahead. People like us who weren't affected last time but who live by canals, also had fears of the huge water flow breaking down banks, water covering sewer systems and causing them to back up, wells being contaminated, and basements being flooded.

It was during the first few days that everyone did what they thought they needed to secure their property. Some homes were vacated, others sandbagged, some basements emptied of all their furnishings and food storage. Priesthood quorums were mobilized to sandbag critical places. Food was prepared and provided for the army of volunteers that worked around the clock. Certain locations were designated as areas for sandbagging and people would congregate there, fill bags, and load them on semi-trailers for delivery to areas needing them.

At the areas, people would transload the bags from the semis to pick-ups and the pick-ups or front-end loaders would transport them to the site. When the ground was too soggy for the vehicles to get to the homes, long lines (700 at one location) would form and the bags would be passed from person to person. Many times people were standing in mud or water as they assisted in this effort.

Most of the homes that were in the flood plain had been sandbagged to keep out the rising water. But even if the sandbags kept the water from entering the basements, the water in the ground below and around the basement had such pressure that the basement floors would buckle and the walls would collapse. People were told that maybe the best insurance against the basement giving way was to let the water fill the basement and equalize the pressure inside and out. They were cautioned not to pump water out of their basements until the water receded outside.

For the first few days of this drama, we were uncertain if we needed to vacate our basement. We were also told to get clean water in containers in case of contamination. The uncertainty of just what we would be facing was very wearing. I would go downstairs and mentally note the things that I thought should be vacated first. I carried empty canning bottles up and filled them with clean water. I debated whether to move everything up or just wait and take a chance. I tried to determine what I would do if our power was off or if our sewer system failed. The thought of my home being flooded and all our belongings ruined occupied my thoughts and I began to truly empathize with others who were going through this. I also recognized that I was not as prepared as I should be with my food storage and water supply. When we received word that the canal headgates were collapsing and that they had bulldozed the canal closed, I sighed a sigh of relief.

One of the more difficult things about this situation is that the water is expected to flow this heavily for 2-3 weeks and that those with homes and crops ruined will not be able to get back to their properties until that time. Of course, that increases the damage and displaces families for a long time.

The constantly moving water erodes everything in its path and there has to be 24 hour surveillance of dikes and other key locations. It has been a marathon for many

individuals whose farms, homes, and businesses are threatened.

It has been heart-warming to see the volunteer response, the food donated, the equipment donated, and the community working together. It has been especially reassuring to see the stake work together to assist its members whose homes are in peril. We lease our pasture to non-members who live in the Riverside area. Several days ago they dropped by and began telling us that they were following closely the instructions the "Bishop" had given them regarding securing their possessions and having provisions. We called some non-member friends who live on the river and offered to help them sandbag, but the father commented that they had all the help they needed and their family was headed over to their neighbors to assist there. I know the local ward must have been the ones who helped this non-member family. What a sweet experience to feel the love and concern of the community for all its members. I'm sure many stories could be told of service given and love shown.

It's Tim's birthday today and I need to get a cake baked and things done. It's his big 16 and Paul has lined him up with Alison's sister for a date next week. He seems to be taking it in his stride. When I asked him if he was ready for the dating scene, he said that he was ready but he wasn't sure his pocketbook was.

Another smaller drama, but emotionally draining thing that occurred last week was the death of our dog, Lucky. Despite his bad habits of chewing on garbage and chasing cars, he was an important part of the family for nearly a year.

Tim was especially close to him and often took him in the Toyota with him. Lucky slept with him on the trampoline, followed him part of the way to school each day, and was a great friend to him and SaraKay.

One day he quit eating and seemed listless. We thought he would snap out of it but he got more and more listless and spent most of the day lying around. When we called the vet, we were told that he probably had a common ailment that resembles flu. The veterinarian said that sometimes a penicillin shot will help but many times they just waste away despite any efforts.

Our neighbors, the Ellis's, offered to give him a shot, but it didn't make any difference. Thursday night Tim went out to sit with him for a while before going to bed. When we got up the next morning, Lucky was lying out on the grass right where Tim had left him the night before. He died during the night.

June 23, 1997

[Mom] Another week has arrived and the prospects are looking good that the flood waters will continue to recede. I noticed a large trailer unloading furniture at Dale Shelley's home this morning and I'm assuming that they are secure enough now that they are moving back in. What a blessing to not have to deal with the mud and muck of flood waters.

I have been grateful for the many county workers, the army of volunteers, the prayers of good people in this community, and the Lord's watch care over us during the past three weeks. I think it is nothing short of miraculous that despite the heavy flows, the damage was held to a minimum.

It's been almost a week now since Daddy left for Wood Badge and we are counting the days until his return. Life gets stale in a hurry without a mate around to share things with. This morning I tried to set the sprinklers for the day and SaraKay and I both got wet before we got them regulated just right. Daddy has always taken care of the watering for me and I have a hard time

keeping things green whenever he takes off for a few days.

Friday, while Tim was mowing Jones' lawn, the mechanism that propels it broke and he brought it home and was in the garage tinkering with it for quite a while before he gave up and decided to use the older one to finish up. It's times like this that I realize how frustrating the life of a widow would be. The old adage, "It's good to have a man around the house" is surely true!

Last weekend was really a special one for me. The Wood Badge staff invited the wives to come to the Island Park Scout Camp for dinner and a program on Friday night. My dear friend, Nancy Williams, was also going and she asked if I would be interested in spending the night at their family cabin on Henry's Lake following the dinner and then driving back Saturday morning. She offered to include SaraKay since her own daughter was going and could stay at the cabin and babysit while we went to dinner with our husbands.

Although plans changed and Nancy's daughter-in-law, Shannon, and her new baby were the ones who accompanied us, it still worked well for everyone and we thoroughly enjoyed getting reacquainted with Bonnie's sister, Shannon. It was the Father\Son Outing that weekend and Paul and Tim were planning on attending that event so we were free to take off and have some fun. We left about 2:30 and enjoyed a leisurely ride amidst the beautiful scenery of the area.

Their cabin is absolutely wonderful. It is situated on a grassy shore of Henry's Lake overlooking a beautiful inlet and picturesque wooded hills. It has a high vaulted ceiling and large windows going completely up the front to the roof. There are three levels, a modern kitchen, laundry room, two bathrooms, sleeping accommodations for 20, basketball court and grassy yard, a deck that wraps around three sides of the cabin, and all the comforts of home except a telephone. It was so beautiful! SaraKay picked out beds in the loft for us to sleep in that night. What a treat to enjoy such cozy accommodations!

Saturday morning we walked down to the boat dock and watched some people fish. The water was so clear that we could see schools of small fish everywhere. The Ron Watt family was there setting their poles and enjoying the beautiful morning. We watched them bait their hooks with everything from marshmallows to bananas. They caught a five pounder the night before but we didn't stay around long enough to see them catch anything that morning. It was fun to be in that beautiful and peaceful setting. We hated to see the morning come to an end.

The program at the Wood Badge dinner was simple but impressive. Daddy showed me his tent and gear before dinner time and we walked around camp surveying the different areas and stations.

The scouts have been promoting a theme the last few years that encourages everyone who works in scouting to help create a "safe haven" for the others in the camp and troop. The concept is that no one should ever feel physically or verbally threatened by anything that transpires. The staff really exemplified that philosophy. That feeling permeated everything that I saw and heard in camp and I came away from that experience refreshed and inspired.

I think it is a great motto to incorporate into our own relationships each day. Think what a difference it would make if we never did anything to cause those around us to feel insecure or unaccepted; if we constantly used our conversations and actions to build and lift and edify.

Since Daddy won't be contributing this week I thought I would fill the rest of this page with short news briefs:

Shauntel spent last week at Girl's camp. The weather, including a tornado-watch for several hours starting at three in the morning, made the week a never-to-be-forgotten experience!

David was sustained as Elder's Quorum president last week and is looking forward to the chance to put some of his ideas to work in his quorum.

John and Laurel are the new Blazer leaders in their Provo ward. They are living in a ward with such notables as Truman Madsen and have enjoyed rubbing shoulders with some of BYU's faculty. They just welcomed home their landlords from their third mission.

Becky is through with teaching tomorrow and will be moving North to finally settle in with Chet. Commuting from Provo to Idaho Falls is no way to live!

Cousin Maren competed in the Miss Arizona Pageant last weekend in Phoenix. Grandpa and Grandma Larsen were able to attend along with Aunt Karen who flew down. Although she didn't win, it was great for so much family to be there to cheer her on.

Lisa and Don Bricker have accepted employment with Motorola and are enroute from Richland to Phoenix this week. They spent the weekend with Grandpa and Grandma Richards and are excited for their new venture.

Tim has a blind date this weekend with Kim Batt, Alison's little sister (doubling with Paul and Alison) and they will be going to the West Yellowstone Playmill. Paul promised to keep things light and the conversation moving. Good luck, Timmer!

No mission call has arrived as yet but we will keep you posted!

Sara Kay began swimming lessons today. She said she didn't do too well floating and they moved her down a class so I thought I'd better check on things tomorrow and make sure we don't spend the next two weeks of lessons in the beginners class again playing rowboat. (Putting your face in the water almost to your nose, walking slowly around blowing bubbles and making an "errrrrrr" sound! And I'm paying $25 for this!)

June 30, 1997

[Mom] The past few days have been rewarding ones. As most of you are aware, Paul received his mission call to serve in El Salvador. He had been watching the mail box for several days. The day it arrived, I had gone out to put some letters in the box at about 11:00 o'clock and saw that the mail had already come. It usually comes after lunch and so I wasn't expecting to find any mail, let alone Paul's call. SaraKay was at swimming lessons, Tim was mowing a lawn, and Paul was at work. I tried holding it up to the light to see if I could read anything that would give me a clue as to the call. Tim arrived home a few minutes later and I showed him and we concocted a plan of how we would tell Paul when he arrived home for lunch.

But, our excitement got the best of us and we got in the car and went to find him. We drove all over and finally located him moving pipe in a hay field. We had to drive quite a way out into the field before we got to where Paul could see us coming. When he realized it was us, he waved and Tim got out of the car and waved the white envelope. Paul broke into a run and so did Tim. What an exciting moment! I wished I had brought a camera to capture that sweet picture of two brothers standing in the middle of a hay field, tearing open the call.

It has been fun for Tim to share in this. The older he gets the more he identifies with it.

Tim found out last Tuesday that he won't be able to work for Randy for the rest of the summer. He had an ideal situation with combining cemetery mowing, private lawns, and then picking up the extra hours at the Pallet Palace. I guess Randy feels like he needs to employ his own sons this summer rather than letting Tim have the work.

Tim's spent the last few days filling out forms at Job Service, making phone calls, and interviewing for jobs. This is certainly not the ideal time of summer to be job hunting. He called Robert Acevedo who is in upper management at Basic American and he told Tim that he would contact the personnel officer and get an interview set up.

Yesterday Tim had a 45 minute interview and went in for drug testing. He is supposed to hear sometime today whether he has the job or not. It would pay $7-8 an hour and would involve some Sundays at first. He would be hired for "casual" which means he fills in for others who are absent and his hours would be irregular. Bishop Acevedo said that once a person hires on, they can work up to better hours but that at first most workers hire on just as Tim is trying to do. He has been sitting here at my side this morning awaiting a phone call. Hopefully it will come through for him.

We just received the phone call and he is to report for an orientation tomorrow morning at 8. Pretty scary! He can't be officially hired until the drug test comes back clean. Tim forgot to tell the lab workers that he takes medication for his skin and that altered the test enough that it didn't come back positive. Luckily, Tim asked us about that last night and I called the hospital and Basic American and clarified the situation. The personnel manager said that Tim was such a fine young man that she suspected that the drug test was showing medication and not drugs.

John and Laurel spent the weekend with us and we thoroughly enjoyed the chance to have them here under more relaxed circumstances. They have given us some beautiful wedding pictures. They are enjoying their apartment and the many gifts they received. Becky and Chet came Saturday evening and we enjoyed having enough family here to play a rousing game of volleyball.

It is nice to have Daddy home and know that another successful Wood Badge experience is behind us. It was especially sweet to have Tim ordained a priest Sunday and to be able to have John and Paul and Dad all in the circle. Following Tim's ordination, Kyle Hanni was ordained to be a deacon and Tim was able to stand in the circle for that. It made for a special occasion for both families!

Chet and Becky attended their ward in Idaho Falls together for one of the few times since moving there two months ago. The people there have been pretty anxious for them to finally get things normalized and put down some roots. Becky called Sunday night and said that Chet had been called to be the scoutmaster. What an exciting call! Of course, Daddy was pleased and anxious to visit with him about it. John and Laurel were able to gather some scout things together before they returned to Provo and Daddy spent some time with them orienting them to their calling.

[Dad Wood Badge was a rich and rewarding experience. We had several unusual situations develop but could see the hand of the Lord in them as we proceeded. We ended up with 49 participants. It was an evidence to me of the divine purposes of what we are doing to see the adversity that virtually all the staff had to overcome to be there as well as many of the participants.

Dave Fullmer, the course director, involved his two assistants, Leland Tomlinson and me in the process of assigning people to squads. We went into the woods and knelt in prayer together and then we began designating people to be in each squad. After all was said and done, we received several confirmations that the right assignments had been made. For example, one person we assigned to the Owl squad had gone to Cub Scout Trainers Wood Badge and was an owl there, she came to the course determined that she was going to be an owl again--we had no idea when we assigned her.

One evening session was dedicated to a program on citizenship and flag etiquette. We had a participant who was a veteran talk. He said he had never seen anyone treat the flag with more respect and meaning than we did at Wood Badge. We concluded with a flag retirement (burning) to dispose of a bunch of flags that were worn and discolored. It was a touching highlight of the course.

I was anxious to hear of Paul's call while I was gone so I called almost every day. When Sue told me that Paul had gotten his call on Thursday, I felt impressed to call him on Friday morning before he left for work. As he described his call and what he was supposed to take with him, he said the recommended gear was an Uzi and kevlar vest. (Haha) There is a great deal of unrest in Central America, but I believe he will be protected while he is on the Lord's errand.

I am grateful for each of you and the service you give in the Lord's kingdom. It is overwhelming to think about the outgoing ripples of influence emanating from a little home in Moreland, Idaho.

July 7, 1997

[Tim] These past two weeks have been dramatic ones. Two Mondays ago I was especially noticing how lucky I was to have my summer work lined up for me while my friends and neighbors had been trying unsuccessfully to get a job. I wondered what I had done that was so good to have everything working out so well. The very next morning I had a rude awakening. No, it wasn't Dad's King Kong yell, the rise and shout song, or Mom yelling to me down the stairs that it was time to get up and we've got a lot to get done today.

If you can imagine it, it was something worse: a call from Randy Cox telling me that he needs his sons to have work so that meant that I was out of a job. It was then that I realized that I hadn't done anything great to be so lucky to have my summer work lined up for me; I was now in the same position as my friends: UNEMPLOYED.

That very morning I started looking for work. I went into the government and Mormon job service. Mom had told me that Bishop Acevado worked at Basic American Foods and that I should get an application for there. The job service man gave me an application but not without telling me that he didn't think it would be worth my time filling it out because the human resources lady at BAF had just told him that she didn't want any more applications. He told me that I HAD MISSED THE BOAT.

Well, I filled it out anyway and a half a week later I got an interview. It lasted 45 minutes. She seemed really impressed with me and told me that I was the last person she would interview for the job. (I had missed the boat, but luckily because of my great swimming skills, I had caught up with it and climbed aboard.)

Well, that should be the end of a perfectly good story but it isn't. She then asked me to take a drug test and if I passed that then I would have a great shot at getting the job. Not a problem, right? WRONG. I went into the drug test thinking everything

was all right. The lady asked me if I had been on any medications that month. I thought I would only need to say yes if I'd been taking medications like steroids or cocaine so I said no when I actually had been on one.

I thought nothing of it and later that night I asked Mom and Dad if I should have said yes and they said that of course I should have. I still thought nothing of it because I thought it wouldn't matter in the testing. However, the lady said if I was going to be hired she would call me at a certain time and that time came and went.

We started to get worried so Mom called her and left a message on her machine telling how I hadn't told the lady that I was on a prescription. In a little while the lady called and told mom that the drug test had come back positive. (At this point I was pushed in the back and fell off the boat.) However, she didn't think that I would be on drugs so she was going to send the drug test to Oregon to check it out. (This gave me some hope so I started calling to my fellow seamen on the boat to help me get back in.) Well, so that Mom won't have to pay more postage, I'll just finish the story and tell you that I made it into the boat. In other words, I got the job. It is a really good job and pays $8.32 an hour. I usually work 12-hour days and on holidays I get time and a half and if I work more than 40 hours a week I get overtime which is also time and a half. Also, I get a 25-30 minute paid break every hour and a half.

One bad thing about the job is that the people are different. Here is an example of what I'm talking about. There is a large cafeteria and a smoking room that is about 1/3 or 1/4 of the size. There is usually about 5 people in the cafeteria and 15 or more making a thick cloud in the smoking room. I don't really know anybody so I talk out loud to myself.

In closing I will give you an example of my usual dialogue and a true incident that happened the other day. "You know what? Americans and maybe people in general only want to spend their money on something that they will be positive they can enjoy. They won't just spend their money on anything. They have to be sure its what they want before they buy it.

Take for example that lady over there at the vending machines, she sure has spent a long time deciding what to buy." (Keep in mind that I sit at a table all by myself but that others can overhear me talking to myself from their tables.) "Oh! All right! She's making a purchase! This is really going to be interesting to see what she gets after taking such a long time making her decision. She's reaching into the vending machine and getting what she decided was just right for her. What? Fritos! Who would take such a long time deciding on what to get and then get a bag of Fritos! I would think maybe a candy bar or cookies but not Fritos!" After I finished saying this I realized someone was staring over at me and had heard what I had said. I glanced over to see a lady staring back at me and giving me this strange look like, Boy, you have really got a problem don't you. That's just one interesting incident of many that are sure to come from working at Basic American. I hope you liked my letter and I would appreciate your feedback. Tim

I guess Tim's job has been the big news of the week around here. He is "plowing new ground" for the Larsen kids, none of whom have ever worked at Basic American. I told Tim that if he does a good job, next year when Mike returns from his mission, he can walk up to the Human Resources lady and say with confidence, "Hi! I'm Tim Larsen's bro and I want a job!" Seriously though, with the wages they pay at Basic American, we may never have a child work at Kesler's again.

One funny thing happened to Tim that he failed to mention. On his first day, he was being trained by a woman who spoke broken English and the loud machinery and difficulty of communicating over the din compounded the problem. Part way through the day, his trainer showed him the break room and pointed to a shelf that had all sorts of packets of Gatorade powder punch base (each packet made up to be 2 and one-half gallons). She told Tim that the company provided the workers with the Gatorade and that he should feel free to take some. Tim, who loves Gatorade, thought he had died and gone to heaven and before he left work that evening, he loaded up his empty lunch cooler with four big packets. He noticed that some of the other workers were looking at him a little funny, but he finished loading up and headed home. It wasn't until the next day with a new trainer that he realized that the punch base was provided for the workers to mix up there in the break room and drink for their breaks.....not haul home for their families. He felt a little sheepish about loading his cooler full and even worried that one of the workers that saw him taking it might "write him up" and the personnel manager would think that he was stealing. This morning he spent some time with his boss and explained it and they both had a good laugh over it.

The other day Daddy received a phone call from Grandpa Larsen. It's always fun to hear from them and get an update on how their mission is going. We appreciated the letter that AlvaLu sent regarding Grandpa's bout with Valley Fever and are grateful that all the other tests came back negative.

We so appreciated the sweet letter from Andrea. Her mention of the temple and the blessings available through the ordinances performed there really hit home with me. Our last two lessons in YW have been on the temple and this afternoon we are taking the girls to the temple grounds. Becky is going to speak to them about her courtship and marriage and then we have some special wedding-type refreshments planned. Hopefully it will motivate the girls to recommit to have a temple marriage.

Daddy's boss, Kim Hansen, has been very ill with an infection that started in his foot, spread to his leg, and then into his bones. He was hospitalized for a week and is now at home but confined to bed. It's a very serious thing that could easily escalate and the doctor's have advised him to stay off his feet as much as possible.

Kim has asked Daddy if he would take his place at the National Scout Jamboree from July 23 to August 9. It would include taking part in the actual jamboree but also involve touring famous sites, and conclude with a two day stay at Disney world! The council will pick up the tab including all meals so that the only expense Daddy would have would be for souvenirs. What an opportunity!

The bad news is that he will miss many of the upcoming events that we have planned for the summer including the Larsen extended family reunion and our night at Cougar stadium for the Sesquicentennial celebration. Luckily, he will return two days before our immediate family reunion on August 11th. I have mixed emotions about being a single parent for three weeks and dread the thought of being the chief irrigator again, but I recognize what a marvelous opportunity this is and don't want Daddy to miss it. The final decision will be made this week.

Paul started his mission shopping and even e-mailed a note to his president in El Salvador. Last night Daddy and I were in bed and we could hear Paul and Tim downstairs visiting in Tim's room. We commented that it was a sweet thing to see their love for each other grow as the weeks pass.

For the Fourth of July, Becky and Chet invited us to go to Idaho Falls and see the fireworks display that is sponsored by Maleleuca. We had heard about it and had been wanting to see it so we jumped at the chance to join them. Paul left about 5 and drove to Alison's and got her and Kim (her little sister) and they went for a picnic on the greenbelt with Becky and Chet.

Tim was off work at 7 and we took him with us and met them about 8. It was a wonderful, warm summer evening and thousands of people were milling around, picnicking, and visiting, awaiting the fireworks display. It started at 9:30 and lasted about a half an hour. It was spectacular!

It was wonderful being in that beautiful setting with family and friends and celebrating the birth of our country. Having Becky and Chet around has been so enjoyable. Becky found out this afternoon that she has a job with the Idaho Falls School District for next year. She was very pleased.

Hopefully each of you took a few moments to reflect upon the blessing of living in this "choice land" and the responsibilities of those of us who have been given so much.

For those of you who are wondering: Yes, Stephani did complete her 5K race and came in 8th of 15 in her age group.

[Dad] With the possibility of going on the Jamboree and tour, there's more pressure on me to get several things taken care of -- such as, newspaper, Tiger Ear signups, ingredients ordered and arranged for, remodeling of the booth and purchasing of another mixer, and ordering token gift for the workers. Then things in regards to my major responsibility-- endowment promotion and contacts. So, I have been feeling just a little pressure.

I've read something this week about "Why There is no Substitute for Parents," by Wade F. Horn, Director of the National Fatherhood Initiative. After laying the foundation with some statistics about fatherless families (nearly four out of ten children in America are being raised in homes without their fathers and soon it may be six out of ten,) he went on to discuss the importance of mothers and fathers. Let me share part of his thoughts:

"Fathers are so critical to the proper socialization of children because they teach by example how to keep negative impulses in check. It is through boys' observation of the way their fathers deal with frustration, anger, and sadness that they learn how men should cope with such emotions. It is also through the observation of how fathers treat mothers that boys learn how men should treat women. If fathers treat mothers with dignity and respect, then it is likely that their sons will grow up to treat women with dignity and respect. If fathers treat mothers with contempt and cruelty, then it is likely that their sons will, too. Fathers are also critical for the healthy emotional development of girls. If girls experience the love, attention, and protection of fathers, then they are likely to resist the temptations of seeking such things elsewhere--often through casual sexual relations at a very young age. Finally, fathers are important in helping children make the difficult transition to the adult world. Boys require an affirmation that they are "man enough." Girls require an affirmation that they are "worthy enough."

Given this understanding, what should we expect when fatherlessness become the norm? We don't need a crystal ball to find the answer. As I indicated earlier, nearly four out of every ten children are being raised absent their fathers right now. The result is that juveniles are the fastest growing segment of the criminal population in the United States. Between 1982 and 1991, the rate at which children were arrested for murder increased 93 percent;

for aggravated assault, 72 percent; for rape, 24 percent; and for automobile theft, 97 percent. Although homicide rates have increased for all ages, those for teenagers have increased more rapidly than for adults.

The teen population is expected to grow by 20 percent over the next decade, and this is precisely the generation most likely to be reared without fathers. The prospect has led many sociologists, criminologists, and law enforcement agencies to conclude that shortly after the tun of the century we will see an adolescent crime wave the likes of which has never been seen before in this country. If that were not enough, we know that each and ever day: 7,700 children become sexually active; 1,100 children have abortions; 2,500 children are born out of wedlock; and 600 children contract syphilis or gonorrhea; and six children commit suicide.

Fatherlessness is not solely responsible for these tragedies, but it certainly is a major cause.

Indeed, all the available evidence suggests that improving the well-being of our children-- and ultimately our nation-- depends upon finding ways to bring fathers back into the home."

July 14, 1997

[Mom] I've had an interesting day. Last night I could feel my headache coming on and I started on my medication. I've found that if I catch it early I can usually keep it contained enough that I can carry on and get through my day. About three this morning I got up to take another dose and then at 6 I took another.

About 8 I went walking with my group of neighborhood friends but I took it slow and easy. Ever since I committed to go on the Pioneer Trek, I have tried to exercise by walking about 3 miles a day. We go to the high school track which is rubberized and it is such a pleasant respite from the demands of the day. SaraKay takes her roller blades and enjoys the chance to skate with some of the other women's children.

When I arrived home I had a lot of phoning to do to line up the upcoming week's events. I spent nearly two hours on the phone and felt grateful to get plans finalized. By this time it was lunch and after lunch I put SaraKay in charge of the phone and I took a nap.

I had an afternoon of cooking ahead and so about 2 pm I started on that. The doorbell rang and upon answering it, I discovered my guest was none other than Don Cheney! He had dropped Curtis off to start summer session at Ricks and Christine and Katy to attend EFY for the week. What a wonderful surprise! I had completed all my phoning, washing, folding, cleaning, and other work and so he and I visited nonstop while I did my supper preparations and baked cakes and rolls.

It was such a joy to have him drop in and talk about everything from family to church and his job. I don't know when I have enjoyed an afternoon more. I was grateful that I had structured my day so that I wasn't feeling the pressures of YW and school board.

He and Deniece are enjoying success with their children and with his work and he is loving his opportunity to serve in the stake presidency. He kept looking at our picture board and complimenting us on our children. Rarely have I had the chance to visit with him to that extent and feel free to share personal experiences that were dear to us. Times like this make me sad that we don't live a little closer!

Sunday evening my brother Nate called and rehearsed with me the marathon they are running with he and the boys in Billings working and Maureen and the girls in

Richland trying to sell the house and working at a cannery.

Chelsea and Ryan are in Seattle where Chelsea is living with Chad and Trish while Ryan undergoes treatments at a hospital there. Their life has been so complicated and difficult these last months with the reoccurrence of his Crohn's disease and things continue to look bleak. Chances are that Ryan may have to forgo his schooling since all the stress seems to activate his condition and yet, how in today's world does anyone avoid stress? It has taken an emotional toll of the whole family and is a constant source of concern.

Nate is enjoying his work in Billings and feels quite confident that he could do well there, but it is all this tying up loose ends that makes it hard. I wish that life would ease up for their family as they have had such a strain for a lot of years.

Daddy spent the better part of last week on the Trails paper and hopefully we will have it ready for mailing by Wednesday. They have wanted him to go to two different camps and relieve the camp directors for a day, but with National Jamboree and all the preparations for that, he is really under the gun. Added to that are his responsibilities for the Trek. These next few days are going to be wild! Sometimes it is a relief to get him gone just to relieve the pressures of all the deadlines.

Paul is busy with mission preparations. He has purchased his suit, shirts, and socks and we are hoping to get his shoes and rain coat in Provo next week. Thursday he will be going through the temple. Becky and Chet are going to join us for that occasion but Steve and Bonnie are not going to be here since she is so close to her delivery date. We hope and pray that everything will go well.

Paul has been anxious to get to the temple so that he could go several times before leaving for El Salvador.

Tim's work has settled down although the 7 p.m. to 7a.m. shift is not his favorite. He had a dream that potato dust was flying all over and a lady yelled to hurry and get it cleaned up. He noticed a large American flag on the wall and thought how nice it was that Basic American would have a flag on the wall.

He began cleaning up all around him and then noticed a picture of Jesus on the wall. He thought how strange that was and then he realized that he wasn't at work; he was at home in bed in his own bedroom! He had gathered all his sheets and blankets around him into a little ball (cleaning up potato dust) and created a mess with his bed covers before the dream ended and he realized what he was doing. It's pretty bad when you can't escape the work place, even in your sleep!

[Dad] I have been working on the Trails and we are ready to take it to the printer today and mailing it tomorrow. It's always a relief to get it out. One of the biggest problems is tracking down information that should have been given to me by someone else. Very few empathize with the job it is to pull together articles and information about everything that is going on in the council and in each of 19 districts and pictures and so on--and then to present it in an interesting way. We are assembling a work crew at the Idaho Falls Scout Office tomorrow to get it in the mail.

Another project that I have been working on is "A Guide to Safe Scouting" booklet that we will print up and mail to all mainline scout leaders. I have been soliciting donations to help underwrite the cost of printing and mailing. That has been an emotionally draining job as well. But, that is coming to an end also. It is at the printers now, all except for the back page which gives credit to all those who have helped to underwrite it. We should mail it the end of this week.

The Trek has been quite a time-consuming project as well. I've helped President Bowman arrange for the special speaker, music, and outlines and questions for trail stops. I've hardly even thought about the games and competitions I'm responsible for.

Also, I have been getting all the bids for materials for the Tiger Ear booth and making decisions regarding suppliers, trying to get as much donated as possible, and choosing a thank you token to give to each worker and getting them ordered.

In the meantime, I have had much of my regular work continuing with Planned Giving Committee meetings and activities relative to that part of my job. I am looking forward to getting away for a few days on the Jamboree.

July 21, 1997

[Mom] I want to get this written so Daddy will be sure to finish it off tonight. He will be leaving Wednesday morning at 2 a.m. on a bus, catch a plane for New York at noon in Salt Lake, and then begin a five-day tour of such sights as the Statue of Liberty and even attend a Broadway production! The bus will then take them to historical sites in Pennsylvania and Washington D.C. before they arrive in Virginia and set up camp at the Jamboree.

Following the Jamboree, they will drive to Disney World and spend three days there and then fly into Salt Lake and home. What a wonderful opportunity!

Daddy is really excited about the trip but his excitement has been tempered by all the things he has had to get done before leaving. A large semi-truck was loaded with all the Teton Peaks Council's gear (duffle bags, bikes, chairs, for 240 boys and leaders) on Saturday and each participant carries with him enough clothes for the tour.

Daddy packed a bike, helmet, and lawn chair as well as a duffle bag full of clothes. He will be taking a cane with him on the plane just in case all the walking on the tour is more than his feet can handle. He has not had any problems the last few months and hopes this experience will not cause his heel to become tender again.

Paul left early this morning for Bruce Lake's cabin and ranch. He will be working there for four days helping to mend fences and do other work. All the hired men were invited to go and spend the time at the ranch complete with meals, access to a hot tub, and possibly some boating and skiing after the work is through.

It is a neat opportunity for him but he has mixed emotions about it since he probably will not be able to make it back to go with us to Salt Lake and the celebration there. He doesn't feel confident enough in his relationship with the Lake's to ask for too many favors so he is going to see how the week goes and decide when we get closer to Thursday.

He has struggled with the work situation this summer because all of the other hired help have worked there for several years and they know the routine and understand what is going on. Paul is new and is still trying to figure out just what they expect and what all the different terms mean. He says they all talk a kind of "cowboy language" that he doesn't completely savvy and it has made it pretty stressful when he is given instructions and he has to ask a lot of questions. I'm hoping that this time together at the ranch will make him feel a little more at home with the situation.

The high point of the week was taking Paul to the temple Thursday evening. Becky and Chet were there with us and were asked to be the witness couple for the session. It was very sweet to stand in the prayer circle with them and Paul. Paul has been reading some books about temples and given

considerable time to prepare himself for that experience, but it was still quite foreign to him as it was to most of us when we went through for the first time. He is planning to go again this Friday and get in several sessions before entering the MTC.

SaraKay sang a solo yesterday in sacrament meeting. She had been asked to participate with seven other little girls in singing a medley of pioneer songs. When she got home from the first practice she announced that she had been asked to sing a solo. I was surprised but pleased and she seemed happy about it, too.

Later, Sister Ellis ask if I would lead the group since they were having trouble staying together. SaraKay sang the first verse of one of the songs alone and then the other girls joined in on the chorus. I wondered all week if she would freeze up when the moment arrived, but she sang right out and even on pitch. We had lots of compliments and she wrote a letter to Mike on the back of the ward bulletin about the experience.

I quote, "Dear Elder Michael Larsen, I had to sing a solow in cherch. I was really scared. When I got done whith it I coudin't belive I did it. This is the song I sang. Day after day the wagons are rolling onward and westward we ever must roam. Your sister, Sara Kay"

Tim had another incident at work last Saturday. He had worked a long 12-hour shift and was anxious to get home. He grabbed his red and white lunch cooler and when he arrived home he left it on the kitchen counter, showered and changed, and came over to the stake center to join us for a stake pioneer supper.

Later when I returned home I was preoccupied with finishing up my Sunday lesson and I didn't clean up the kitchen before I went to bed. Sunday morning I got up and started to get dinner and do up the few dishes from the night before. I opened the lunch box and started to unload it. To my surprise, I realized that it contained a small lunch of rice and chow Mein, a bunch of grapes, a bottle of milk, two toothpicks and a piece of gum all neatly arranged in the box. There was also a pair of gloves.

It took me a minute to realize that I was looking at the lunch of someone other than my son and that someone back at the plant who had gone on shift at 7 p.m. and off at 7 a.m. had discovered part way through their shift that their lunch had been stolen!

Immediately all sorts of horrible thoughts started going through my mind: what if the lunch belonged to a 300 pound bully who saw Tim's empty lunch box sitting next to where he had left his and was going to find him and "punch him out" when he caught up to him? What if it was reported to Human Resources that the same boy who tested positive on the drug test and stole the Gatorade had struck again and now was stealing people's lunches? What if the other person had taken Tim's cooler and was holding it ransom?

I immediately told Daddy what had happened and all he could do was shake his head and asked that proverbial question asked by all parents of teen-agers; "What next?"

Well, I knew I had to break the news to Tim and so I went down and woke him up and told him. Talk about a rude awakening!

Anyway, between the two of us we came up with a plan that we hoped would appease the victim: Tim wrote a note of apology, affixed three dollar bills to the note to cover the cost of the food, and quickly returned to the plant where he deposited the pilfered cooler and retrieved his own.

Before taking the cooler back he checked the gloves and found the name "Chen" written in magic marker on the inside. They were tiny little women's gloves and that relieved a lot of anxiety for both of us.

It also probably explained why we hadn't gotten an irate phone call Saturday night when she discovered the error. Oriental people tend to be polite. Hopefully she has found her cooler by now and feels that Tim did all he could to make things right. So much for the ongoing saga of Basic American and Tim, the all-American boy!

I received a sweet phone call from Grandpa Larsen. He had some questions concerning the Larsen reunion and so I filled him in on what was happening. We have been so busy these past few weeks that I haven't had time to give much thought to the reunion. As I visited with Grandpa I realized how hard it's going to be without them.

We will feel their absence but like Grandpa said, "The Lord has priority on our time right now."

One thing we talked about was his responsibility for 50+ mission cars. There are over 200 missionaries and the upkeep of their vehicles is Grandpa's responsibility. Just to give you an idea of some of the problems he faces; some of the cars are shared by two companionships and their whereabouts have to be tracked constantly; in the six weeks of June to mid-July there had been 10 accidents involving the vehicles, and in any given day, Grandpa gets as many or more calls at the mission home as any other individual, including the President! What a boon to the mission to have someone like Grandpa who knows so much about that sort of thing and who is so pleasant to work with.

I'm sure AlvaLu is equally as capable and that both of them have been invaluable to the Lord's work.

July 21, 1997

[Dad] This past week has been no different than previous weeks--much to do and limited time to accomplish it. A lot of the "spare" time I've had I've been working on Trek materials for President Bowman and have finally finished them in a form that he likes and will be functional. There are a number of trail stops designated along the way, during which we were to have outlined discussions and questions for the Ma and Pa to lead their family in.

We also were able to get the Trails published and mailed. I sure appreciated the help of SaraKay, Sue, Becky, and Paul.

In the midst of all the doing, I was thinking about the Jamboree and gathering and packing. My primary bag had to be packed and ready to go on a truck last Saturday morning. I also decided to send back a bike and got my red bike repaired and ready to go as well. It's exciting to think of the sights and experiences that are ahead. I'm just sorry that I can't take Sue with me, or any of you; it would be so much more delightful to share with my family.

One of the highlights of last week was going to the temple with Paul. He is such a fine, prepared, spiritual young man. We went through the 6:00 p.m. session last Thursday with two other missionaries and a couple that were getting married. The Idaho Falls Temple is always so beautiful and the workers so friendly, making such a fuss over those going through for the first time. It is also very rare for us to go there without seeing quite a few people that we know. This was no exception.

A special highlight of the session was when Becky and Chet were chosen as the witness couple. We were able to take the time and relish that experience with Paul. Afterwards, we went to Becky's to help eat leftovers and enjoy her fruit pizza. She and Chet have fixed up their apartment and have such a flair for decorating.

It's hard to believe that I will be leaving in about 40 hours. I'm looking forward to the getaway. But, I'm not looking forward to the heat and humidity of Virginia. Also, my

work is going to be in the commissary with 24 hours on and 48 hours off. It's hard for me to imagine that. All the freight comes in at night and then we will break it out for each meal for each troop to pick up and prepare.

I know one of the other commissary assistants and he said they are really a bunch of great guys and that I will enjoy working with them. I will be sleeping in a large 16' x 32' army tent with nine other guys, but all of our meals are prepared for us by a staff and served in a cafeteria tent.

August 3, 1997

[Mom] I didn't get a letter written last week. Things have been so hectic that I've hardly had time to think about Daddy being gone and I guess in that respect it has made his trip a little easier for me. The day after he left we went to Provo for the Sesquicentennial celebration at Cougar Stadium. I was grateful that Becky went with us and could do the driving, although the traffic was much lighter than we expected. We had carefully planned our itinerary and knew exactly where we would be going and when.

Early Thursday morning I received a phone call from Steve. He visited for a few minutes and then suggested that since we were coming, we ought to drop by and see them on our way south since they weren't very far out of our way.

Mentally I was tabulating just how far it was to Tooele and how long it would take us to make that detour when he mentioned that they weren't in Tooele, but at the LDS Hospital with a new baby. What a sweet surprise and how convenient for us!

We arrived at the hospital about noon and were pleased to find Mom and Baby both doing fine! She is a beautiful dark-haired little girl. Bonnie had been to her doctor the day before and she was dilated to five. He asked if she wanted to go to the hospital and have the baby right then but she deferred and went home to take care of some details. When her mother, who is a nurse, found out that she was dilated to five, she told her to get back to the hospital immediately. She and Steve went in that evening and Christine was born on July 24 at about 4 a.m.

Several months ago when I heard about the Sesquicentennial celebration, I purchased 20 tickets. Daddy, Paul, and Chet were on the list of family that I thought would join us for this event as well as John's friends, the Chen family, Grandpa and Grandma Richards, and Kathy and Dick and family. By the time the actual event arrived, the guest list had changed so many times that I wasn't really sure who was coming. I was discouraged about ever planning a family outing again. Daddy was at jamboree, Paul was at the Lake's ranch for the week, Chet had to work, the Chen's changed their vacation plans and couldn't come, and Grandpa and Grandma Richards didn't feel comfortable with the crowds and long walks to get to the stadium seats. Luckily, we had enough other friends and family that is wasn't hard to find others who were interested in going and it turned out to be a very congenial bunch.

We thoroughly enjoyed the marvelous program that was both inspiring and entertaining. The biggest thrill for me was when 2500 MTC missionaries came out of the four corner portals and encircled the field singing "Called To Serve". The audience rose to their feet and stayed standing throughout the entire number.

The whole program was done to the music of the Tabernacle Choir, the Utah Symphony, and the Mormon Youth Choir, and was absolutely magnificent! The weather was warm and the evening beautiful. What a thrill to witness this culminating event and feel the spirit there. Following the performance, we walked back to John and Laurel's apartment and

sat and visited while the traffic thinned out a little before Kathy and Dick and others left for home.

It was so nice to know that we could spend the night with John and Laurel and not have to fight the horrendous traffic that evening. We hadn't had a chance to visit them since their wedding and it was fun to see how cute their apartment is with all their new wedding gifts. They are both involved with school and work, but they have created a lovely home and are doing well. We appreciated their hospitality to us and enjoyed the chance to catch up on what they are doing.

One of the reasons we made the trip to Provo was to do some mission shopping for Paul. When he couldn't come, we moved ahead and still did some shopping for him as well as school shopping for SaraKay and Tim. Fortunately, most of what we purchased for Paul fit and he was pleased with our selections.

He had a wonderful time at the ranch and felt like he was appreciated for the work he did. He found out today that he will be going up this Tuesday for the rest of the week and he seems pleased with that opportunity. He said it is a beautiful area and it was fun to be in the mountains for a change.

Enroute home we visited Grandpa and Grandma Richards and shopped at the 45 So. Deseret Industries for trek stuff. It has been delightful to have my parents living so close and to be able to stop by and feel like we are keeping in touch with them. I know Kathy and Dick are enjoying having them closer and that they include them in on family events and happenings. It is comforting that they have Kathy nearby to help out and look after them although they are very independent.

The following weekend was pretty hectic as we tidied up the house and prepared for Daddy's siblings and their families to arrive. Mark and Rita arrived early afternoon on Saturday and Jennifer and Rachel got here shortly thereafter. I had planned on a bunch for supper and was glad I had as we fed 15 before we were through. We had a good time catching up on family news but I was really tired by bedtime and grateful that they were sleeping at Gary and Linda's.

Jeff and Jenn and Rachel slept here and attended meetings with us Sunday. Becky and Chet arrived Sunday afternoon and helped us load everything into the van for the two-day camp out at Sportsman Park. They were invaluable as they carried gear and equipment, packed the van, and helped us gather what we needed for the reunion as well as Becky's help with the food for our meal Monday night.

I had a Trek meeting so the rest of the group left about 4:30, set up camp including tents and bags and I followed a few hours later. It was wonderful to see the extended family again although many of the older cousins didn't attend and Staff and family were represented only by Jenn and her baby. Chet and Paul drove back home late that night and had to work the next day, but the rest of us slept in tents and visited until late that night. I kept wishing Daddy could be there and knew how tough it was for him to know that his family was together.

Monday morning we gathered water toys, donned our swimming suits, and headed for the beach. Gary graciously used his boat to tow kids on tubes, pull knee-boarders and skiers, and take us adults on rides around the reservoir. Although it wasn't a terribly hot day, it was warm enough that we enjoyed being on the beach and everyone had a great time. I took several of our life jackets as well as some water noodles and we had a lot of fun playing and swimming when we weren't boating. About three o'clock we all went back to the camp ground to clean up and

get supper ready. Luckily there was a large shelter with ample picnic tables and electricity; all which made for easy mealtimes with so many to feed.

Monday evening a storm moved in and so following supper we played games in the shelter and visited. The rain hampered any further water sports that evening and so when Chet arrived, he didn't get to water ski like we had hoped for. Paul returned that morning and went to the beach with us since his boss didn't need him that day. By bedtime, the rain had created havoc with some of the tents. We tried to situate things so that our sleeping bags wouldn't get wet. Jeanie and I shared our tent and we let the teen-age boys have hers.

Our tent had been pitched in a lovely shaded area but once it started to rain and blow, the branches of the overhead trees knocked against the tent creating problems with the water seal. To add to our problems, the wind was blowing so hard that several of the tent pegs were pulled out of the ground and that put the tent off balance and water pooled and then dripped.

Jeanie and I kept mopping up to keep SaraKay and Bethany dry while they slept peacefully, totally oblivious to our plight. About 1 a.m. I felt another peg pull out and I wondered if we were all going to need to get up and sleep in our cars. I was grateful that I finally dropped off to sleep sometime later and forgot the tent and water. When morning dawned we faced the task of drying things off before loading up to go home. We were glad it was a warm day with a gentle breeze.

Jeanie and family spent the rest of Tuesday and Wednesday morning with us. The kids enjoyed playing with cousins while I went to the auction at Grandpa and Grandma's. There were several very nice items that I was able to buy including a small rocking chair, luggage set, and bed for SaraKay. There again, I was wishing that Daddy had been here to do his own bidding on items since I don't have much of a feel for what he values and would be interested in buying.

Wednesday morning I headed for Tooele to help out there for a few days. SaraKay and I went together, leaving Paul and Tim to fend for themselves. It was fun to be with Steve and Bonnie and their little ones, although there really wasn't very much to do as they and Bonnie's mother had kept things organized and clean. We took several walks with Rachel and Nathan in the stroller and wagon, read books, did laundry, fixed meals, and tried to be more help than bother. They have some wonderful friends and ward members who have been solicitous of them and their home teachers even brought in supper one night. By Friday afternoon I was on my way home feeling grateful that I had been able to lend a hand and share in the joy of welcoming a new baby.

This morning Daddy called from the Jamboree and I was able to fill him in on family news and the usual list of break-downs. I can't believe how much we depend on him to keep things running around here. I hesitate telling him the news because I don't want to ruin his trip but Tim refuses to let me call a mechanic for anything. He knows that Daddy can probably fix it and wouldn't want some expensive bills when he returns this Saturday. This morning I mentioned that the clutch on the Toyota isn't working and we can't do our lawns without it.

Daddy suggested that it probably needed fluid so I called Rod at Countryside Tire and he confirmed that that was probably the case. He gave me instructions on where to pour the brake fluid and so at 8:30 this morning I was outside with my head under the hood of the Toyota playing mechanic. Paul is leaving early tomorrow morning for the ranch for five days and Tim is working 7

a.m. to 7 p.m. shifts and needs the Toy for his day off to get his lawns done that he didn't get done last weekend.

Daddy sends his love and said to tell everyone that he is doing fine. He had an interesting experience yesterday as he was waiting for church services at the Jamboree. (Thomas S. Monson!) He began visiting with a father and son who were sitting next to him and discovered that they were from Iowa. He casually mentioned that he had a daughter and son-in-law living in Coralville, Iowa and the father said that Coralville was in his stake. Come to find out, this fellow is the bishop of a ward in Shauntel's stake and he was with her at girl's camp a few weeks ago. He commented on what a lovely young woman Shauntel is! Of course, Daddy had to agree.

But the story doesn't end there. As Daddy proceeded to brag about his family, the fellow mentioned that he had been in Chihuahua the week before on business and had met a handsome Elder Larsen at a church meeting. Sure enough. It was our Mikey! Isn't it a small world?

As many of you are aware, Shauntel and Randy had been selected to be the parents of a baby boy who was due this week. As a part of the adoption procedure, the birth mother was to exchange letters with the adoptive mother prior to giving the baby up for adoption. Shauntel and Randy had written their letter to the birth parents but had never received a letter from them. This concerned Shauntel but they continued to await word from the Social Services worker that the baby had been born and everything was moving ahead as planned.

Last Thursday they received word that the mother had changed her mind and taken the baby home from the hospital with her. When this happens, it is about 90% sure that the baby will stay with the birth mother. As of yesterday, it did not look very hopeful that Shaunnie and Randy would get the baby.

Of course, this has been a disappointment to them and to all of us who have prayed with them. It is such an emotional roller-coaster to live through the ups and downs of the adoption process and feel so helpless.

One time when I was visiting with Shaunnie about their situation, she said that Randy had expressed his feeling that despite all the considerations involved in this adoption process, he really felt that the Lord would see to it that they received the baby that was right for them. I agree with Randy and know that the Lord is mindful of them and their desires and will in His own time and way bless them with their righteous desires. So much of life has to be accepted in faith; the proverbial "step into the darkness".

August 17, 1997

[Mom] Stephani and family (minus Linds who is returning for a week of work) will be here about noon and I want to be able to give my time to her and the kids while we have them here. She will stay for a few days, drive back to Salt Lake and pick up Linds at the airport, and then they will all drive back to Morgan Hill and move into their new home. They stored their belongings following vacating their rental home before coming on vacation, so it has been a very exhausting few weeks for them, but they are excited for the upcoming changes and are thrilled that the way has been opened for them to get into their own place.

We enjoyed having them at the reunion. We know that Linds loves the Teton area which has been such an important part of his life and it was special to be there with him and Steph as they baptized their firstborn. What a beautiful setting for that sacred ordinance. We had originally planned to do

Kate's baptism on Monday evening but a storm moved in and didn't permit it. I worried that Tuesday would be a repeat when clouds began gathering in the late morning, but by evening they had cleared off and we all congregated on the banks of the lake, held a baptismal service outlined according to Katie's wishes, and then watched her and her dad walk into the cold waters of the lake together for her baptism. She never even flinched when she had to go under again since one of her legs rose to the top of the water when she went under the first time.

There were lots of "Kodak moments" during our three-day stay including the sight of Linds, Daddy, Steve, Chet, John, and Paul gathered around Katie who was wrapped in a warm blanket as she was confirmed by her father.

I was especially grateful for the opportunity the baptism gave us to have the gospel taught with Jeff and Jonie and their two girls present. Sometimes in those situations the Spirit is felt so strongly that it can influence people to investigate the church and I hoped that it would stir something within them so that they will consider making it a part of their lives.

Before they left for home on Wednesday I visited with Jonie and encouraged her to again be involved in the programs of the Church. I know there is so much goodness in her and that she could be a tremendous asset to the branch in Cass Lake.

For the last several months I've hoped that they would be able to come and I was grateful that everything turned out so well. Each one there included them and I know Sidney and Cory felt at ease and loved the association of the other cousins. When they first arrived, they looked like a typical Indian family with Jeff's long hair tied back in a pony tail and Jonie and daughters with their flowing black hair. They seemed like an unlikely looking bunch to be joining us for the reunion, but it was sweet to see how quickly all of you extended love and hospitality that you showed the rest of the family. I think they were touched by the many things that happened during the five days they were with us.

Daddy and I were impressed with Jeff and his tenderness with his girls. Sunday morning I sat in Paul's bedroom where their family slept and visited with him as he combed and braided the girls' hair and helped them get ready for the day. He was so gracious and willing to help with all that transpired and joined in the fun as well.

It was fun to have Steve and his little ones with us too. We so appreciated Bonnies' willingness to share him with us despite her recent delivery and all the adjustments that go with that. Steve is a capable young father and I couldn't help noticing how many of the other family members helped with his children throughout the reunion, whether at the waterfront or during mealtimes.

It was especially gratifying to have our two newest members (Chet and Laurel) there so that we could all get better acquainted. It has been such a joy to see the strength they bring to our family and to their own family units. John and Laurel left for home about noon Wednesday since John was taking his last final of the summer term and needed to get back in time for that.

Becky and Chet stayed till the bitter end and eventually helped with the final clean-up of the lodge and kitchen area including all the mopping. It was an exhausting morning by the time we locked things up and left for home but I think we left things in good enough shape that they will welcome us another year. We definitely left things cleaner than we found them. It was wonderful to have the facilities we did especially during the nightly storms that dumped a considerable amount of rain on us.

Tuesday evening after the baptismal service Paul, Stephani and I provided a "fish-pond" game for the children, Daddy led some of the group in leather and bead crafts, some played ping- pong, and some sat and visited. Later when the children were in bed we played a fun name game and ate ice cream. It was great to be together and I couldn't help thinking about those who were missing. How we would have loved to have had them join us!

It was about 5 when we finally arrived home and unloaded, cleaned out coolers, put away camping equipment, and starting the laundry. Tim and I had gathered our Trek supplies before leaving for the reunion, but there was still a considerable amount of packing and gathering that needed to be done before we went to bed in order to get to the stake center by 6 the next morning. I had contracted Daddy's cold and my nose was running a stream. I wondered how I could function on the trek feeling as worn out as I did and sick with a cold.

We all worked to get done what was necessary and by 10 o'clock we were packed, bathed, and ready to go. Daddy gave me a blessing and Paul gave Tim one and we went to bed. I appreciated the help that everyone gave to get us off.

The trek proved to be the "best of times" and the "worst of times". The entire experience was orchestrated to create as nearly authentic a situation as possible. We were bussed to a remote region, assigned into families with about 14 people per family. Each family had a Ma and Pa who were a married couple and an Aunt and Uncle who were adults, but not a married couple.

The children of the family were youth of different ages, 12-18, who were from the various wards in the stake. There was a total of 31 families and over 550 participants including the support staff. We were given detailed instructions as to what to bring and wear. The first day we trekked about 9 miles into a "base camp" pulling and pushing our family's handcart with all our possessions including Dutch ovens, clothes, sleeping bags, and water. We each received a small tin cup with we carried on a belt or in a pocket and which we used at each trail stop to keep from getting dehydrated.

Our first day was difficult especially since our rations were sparse and we didn't finish our trek until nearly 10 pm, having walked the last few miles in the dark. That night we rationed out a roll and broth to each family member.

The sleeping accommodations were pretty primitive, too; the girls on a tarp on one side of the handcart, the boys on the other. We dressed in our sleeping bags and lived without a mirror for three days. The second day there were pioneer games and competitions such as horseshoes, stick pulling, leg wrestling, and sack racing. That evening there was a tournament held and a large dance afterwards. It was such a fun night, complete with an Indian chief arriving dressed in a beautiful war bonnet and riding a high-spirited mount! It was exciting to see almost all 500 participants, young and old alike, dancing round dances, the Virginia Reel, and other group dances. Following this, a fireside was held and then bedtime. The third day there was a devotional, a two hour solo experience for each participant and a testimony meeting before we loaded our handcarts and trekked out to where the buses were waiting.

It was physically very demanding for most of the participants but I think that everyone came away grateful for all the pioneers endured for the gospel's sake. I had kept touch with Tim throughout the events although he was not a part of my pioneer family and we cheered each other on.

I was relieved to make it through the experience without harm or injury. It had been a concern to me over the past months because I knew it would be a rigorous hike and I wasn't sure that I was up to it. I knew Daddy's blessing had sustained me and helped me have the energy to keep going.

One interesting and potentially very dangerous situation that developed was that the area was infested with wasps. The team that picked the location which was a beautiful valley in the hills above Bancroft didn't realize that there was this problem until we arrived. By that time it was too late to make a change and so we wore insect repellent and tried to be careful. I found that they usually wouldn't bite if I didn't aggravate them but some of the kids would run or swat at them and then they would get bitten.

I was standing getting ready to do some target shooting with a bow and arrow and unconsciously I brushed my apron with my hand and there had been a wasp on my apron and it stung me on the hand. It was one of the most painful bites I had ever had.

My friend got bitten on the tongue as she took a bite of cornbread and didn't realize there was a wasp on the side of her piece of bread. Needless to say, it made for some pretty cautious campers. When the event was over, we counted that there had been 340 bites throughout the three days. I think we were very fortunate that no one was seriously injured or had an allergic reaction.

[Dad] The Jamboree was a great experience. In some ways it was like Sue's description of the trek--the best of times and the worst of times. It would have been a lot more enjoyable without having to shepherd 225 boys and 30 leaders around. But, without them, the experience would not have been possible.

We had six troops of 36 boys and 4 leaders go from our council. They were all dressed in full uniform and everywhere we went we drew a lot of stares and comments as we wound our way through airports and scenic and historic sites. Many people would comment that they had been scouts and wanted to know where we were from and where we were going. Each troop had their own color--red, green, teal, etc. Their shoulder patches were that color, their hats, their duffel bags, and that made it a lot easier to keep them all straight.

We left Idaho via bus to SLC early on Wednesday, July 23. Our group had staggered flights from SLC to New Jersey where we spent the first night. Thursday, the buses took us to Battery Park where we lined up for the ferry to the Statue of Liberty. It was a wet, rainy day and it was hard to keep track of everyone, but we had lunch at the food court at Pier 17 at the South Street Seaport in New York. The afternoon was spent touring New York, walking some of the streets, visiting Times Square, etc. The Official All-Star Cafe was the site for our dinner that night and then on to either Phantom or Les Miserables. My tickets were for the Phantom and I was thrilled with the production. It is incredible the staging and effects that are utilized!

The next day was spent in Philadelphia--touring Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell, Betsy Ross House, US Mint, etc. There truly is nothing like being there and seeing and touching historic spots to have them take on a whole new meaning. Many things are physically smaller than you would imagine, but the bigger than life feelings you have as you contemplate what went on there and the significance of those events in the history of our country can be overwhelming.

That afternoon, our coaches took us through Amish country to the Good and Plenty for dinner and then on to Hershey Park. I would have been content to have spent more time in Philly rather than the

time in an amusement park, but I think the boys really enjoyed the park. We spent the night in New Cumberland, PA.

Saturday was our day in Gettysburg. We started with the Electric Map rehearsal of the battle to give us an overview of what took place and then our guides took each coach around the battlefield to review the events of that great battle. It was a spiritually moving experience for me to be there and experience the circumstances of that battle and be able to see places I had read about--Cemetery Ridge, Seminary Ridge, Big Round Top, Little Round Top, Devil's Den, the wheat fields--stone and pole fences--of Pickett's Charge. It is hard to imagine the magnitude of hand to hand combat resulting in 52,000 dead in three days of battle. I felt that the ground we were walking on was certainly hallowed by the blood of those Americans who died there whether dressed in gray or blue. The boys enjoyed the buffet lunch at General Pickett's and then we were off to Washington, DC. We were able to tour the Capitol Building; Washington, Lincoln, and Jefferson Monuments; visit war memorials for Viet Nam, Korea, WWII; and so on.

Sunday was a unique experience with visiting services at the National Cathedral. It took me back to my mission experiences in England and visiting Cathedrals and services over there. We took a Metro ride to the Air/Space Smithsonian--watched an Imax film, "To Fly", had my picture taken with Newt Gingrich who happened to be there, and then hit some highlights of the Smithsonian Museum of American History.

Dinner that night was at the Hard Rock Cafe. The next day we visited Arlington National Cemetery, saw the changing of the guard at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, a wreath ceremony, and then proceeded on to the National Jamboree at Fort AP Hill, Virginia. I'll have to write about the Jamboree itself next week as I am out of time and need to be getting to work. To visit those historical sites is to gain a greater insight and feeling for the history of this country, the lives and times of those who were a part of it, and a greater commitment to preserving one nation, under God, indivisible for future generations of Americans. Love, DAD

August 25, 1997

[Mom] I've spent the day making applesauce with some apples Randy's grandmother gave me last week. She has several trees but has given most of the apples to friends and neighbors since she doesn't do much canning anymore. It was a very sweet gesture. She called me last Sunday and Monday Steph and kids arrived for a few days' visit so we took them over with us and it made short work of picking them. The trees were loaded and the branches bent nearly to the ground so everyone had plenty of apples within their reach and it made for a fun activity.

When we arrived home the kids fed the over- ripe ones to the horses and that was fun, too. Although most of the apples were ready last week, I wasn't sure I wanted to get into the project of making applesauce with so many little ones running around so I waited until this morning and tackled it alone.

Monday evening I checked the garden and found that there was an enormous picking of beans so again we rallied the troops and we all picked beans. Daddy got several videos for home evening and we snapped beans while we watched movies. Katie and Sam were wonderful help in the garden and enjoyed getting involved in the harvest.

On Tuesday we went to the zoo and met Becky and her friend there for a picnic. We left here about 10 that morning and returned by about 3 that afternoon. It had been a really hot day and the half hour drive to and from Idaho Falls was too long for the kids. When we finally arrived home,

they headed downstairs to play, swam in the kiddie pool, fed the horses, watched movies, and seemed pretty content. We decided that we wouldn't worry about going anywhere special and just let them play together. That seemed to be their favorite pastime. Stephani and I took advantage of the time to visit while we cooked, did laundry, and canned string beans.

Wednesday Stephani cooked us some of her famous pies and a wonderful pizza and Tim tried to convince her to stay on as chief cook! She really does have some great recipes! Thursday night we went to the temple while Tim babysat. It's always a treat to be in the temple with our children and it was especially nice for Paul and Stephani to share that experience.

Soon after Paul left for work Friday morning, Stephani commented that it was hard to say good-bye to Paul, recognizing that it will be two years before she will see him again. Later that evening, Paul commented that it had brought a lump to his throat when he said his good-byes that morning to Steph and kids. I'm grateful that Paul has had all the family time these last few weeks.

Thursday Tim and Sara Kay started back to school. I can't believe the summer is past and we are into school again. Within 24 hours of school beginning, the phone started ringing regarding school board business and I am "back in the saddle again". I won't complain. Once I completed our family reunion and the Trek I felt like a huge weight had been lifted from my shoulders. With everyone gone during school hours now, I feel like I have quiet time to collect myself and do what needs to be done.

This Friday Aunt Maureen will be bringing Tenille and some friends through on their way to Ricks College and they will spend the night here before checking into their apartments on Saturday morning. Curtis (Deniece's boy) is already there.

Grandma Richards called and said that Uncle Charles is bringing Sean and Tara to Provo this Wednesday and will be stopping to visit and spend the night. I forget that college is starting up since this year we only have John and Laurel attending and they have been going all summer. I'm looking forward to our trip south on September 17th to drop off Paul, visit Grandpa and Grandma Richards, John and Laurel, and pick up some Utah tomatoes for canning.

As some of you have heard, the wet weather this summer has caused a potato blight to spread and many of the potato fields are yellowed and dead. This is the same blight that caused the famine in Ireland and it has been a serious enough concern that the stake and wards have organized to see that every family garden is sprayed and our prayers and fasting are combined in the farmer's behalf. It is difficult to know how this will affect Spud Harvest this year. Dismissal for harvest is a very touchy subject among the community and a situation like this creates problems for everyone; students, teachers, and farmers alike. The blight kills the vines and so the tubers stop growing; many of the fields look like they normally look just before harvest. I'm already hearing rumblings of early dismissal, and postponing Homecoming. I'm grateful that we don't have to deal with the ups and downs of farming. It is such a stressful occupation with all the unknowns and worries.

Saturday we made a quick trip to Idaho Falls to get Tim's Chamber's outfit and to see Becky and Chet's new home. They made an offer on a lovely home in Idaho Falls and the owners accepted their offer and now they are jn the process of lining up financing. It's pretty exciting. I was talking the other day with Superintendent White

and he commented that of his three children, not one of them has been able to get into a home of their own yet. I'm so grateful that you married children have somehow found the means to take this important step and buy your first home. In today's economy, that is pretty amazing, considering how fresh out of college most of you are.

Today is the day Steph and Linds will move into their new home in Hollister and my thoughts and prayers are with them. In situations like this, there are a hundred details to be taken care of and it is expensive and exhausting at best.

I'm enclosing a SHORT letter from Mike. On the envelope he wrote: Caution: Extra short letter inside, Enjoy! Well, it's short but it's great to have him so happy and doing well. I am also enclosing an invitation that Paul sent out for his testimonial. Thought that would be interesting for you to see even though we know most of you won't be able to attend.

[Dad] It was indeed a treat to have Steph, Katie, Sam, & Josh here last week. I forget how fun grandkids are. We are so excited for them--moving into their new home in Hollister this week. That is really going to change life for them. I felt like I had died and gone to heaven as I ate Steph's banana cream pie--it was wonderful!

The temple truly was a sweet experience--it seems like it isn't often enough that we are able to share that experience with our children. What tremendous insights into life and the plan of salvation. The tug and pull between Satan and the Savior continues to go on, even today. So many times it is difficult to see through Satan's lies and it is easy to be deceived a little here and a little there as he leads us "carefully down to hell". It's so crucial that we stay close to the prophets and their counsel. I am grateful for another general conference just around the corner.

I was touched by a brief review of M. Catherine Thomas' *"Spiritual Lightening."* She develops the idea that *"when we are weighed down by the sorrows of a Telestial world, we need some spiritual lightening."* She reminds us *"that we came down to a fallen world to experience deliverance from it,"* and she points out that our many mortal burdens may be lightened by faith in a God who's in charge and *"will bring to our attention that which it is necessary for us to know when we need to know it."*

The reviewer quotes Thomas as calling marriage *"the greatest spiritual challenge and has the greatest potential, along with parenthood, to make godly beings of us,"* adding that *"marriage may be one of our greatest tutorials in perfecting love in ourselves."* Maybe it is just my age, but I have come to appreciate more than ever the choice relationship I have with your mother. It is a great challenge to spiritually keep her in sight on the horizon, let alone keep up with her. As I introspect--it is rather obvious to me that parenthood and my marriage have made a more godly being out of me--though I have many miles to go. It is also one of the greatest joys to observe each of you married children and your relationships with your spouses and recognize how much potential for growth there is when a husband and wife are "equally yoked together."

It is Tiger Ear time again. I am involved in getting all the volunteers lined up and all the materials pulled together. It is rather satisfying to see it all happen. We are making some rather dramatic changes in the booth this year and I hope it all works out.

I had better close and get to bed. Tomorrow is a big delivery day for Tiger Ear supplies and ingredients. Mom and SaraKay are resuming 6:00 a.m. piano lessons and so it will be an early morning. Sure love each of you and pray daily for you.

September 1, 1997

[Mom] Daddy left early this morning to load supplies at the Blackfoot scout office and get them transferred to the Tiger Ear booth before it opens at 9:00 a.m. Chet and Becky have agreed to work the first shift and then they will spend some time looking around at exhibits. It's been a long time since Becky has attended the fair and I'm interested in what she thinks. I still remember the first time I attended the fair after we moved back to Blackfoot and being married for about 9 years. I remembered the fair as "bigger than life" when I was younger, but the first time back as an adult, I was disappointed that it didn't hold the same magic for me.

Being in charge of the booth has given Daddy a whole new perspective on the event. He has become friends with many of the owners of adjoining booths and he also is on a first name basis with a lot of the support staff. He attends meetings with the general manager of the fair and has had opportunity to represent the council's view on many of the decisions that affect the food vendors. Although the eight days of the fair are hectic, it has been reassuring to see how each year Daddy and Don Scott work together to improve the situation, anticipate needs, and fine tune the whole process. I think it is quite a source of pride to him when the task is successfully completed for another year. The most encouraging thing about the entire experience is to see the army of volunteers who sign up year after year and donate their labor to help the cause of scouting along. There are certainly a lot of fine people in this council.

Tim and SaraKay are in school and adjusting to the newness. Tim is taking Chambers, History, English, AP Biology and Pre-calculus. His math class has been very difficult and Paul has been tutoring him nearly every night. It's been wonderful to have Paul around to perform this service, but in a couple of weeks he'll be gone and Tim is trying to prepare for the day he will be on his own. Some nights he spends several hours doing homework. I've been grateful that he has the money to get through his year and not have to work after school.

A couple of weeks ago Tim went to the doctor for skin problems and he was put on Acutane to help clear up the acne. It has multiple side effects and one of them is that the skin will worsen before it starts clearing up. This has been such a trial for Tim but he has been trying to be patient and carry on although it has made his life a little less joyful for the time being. We appreciate Chet's counsel and advice since he has dealt with this in years past and he was able to provide Tim with some insights on what to expect and how to deal with it.

Friday night Maureen, Tenille, and three friends spent the night with us before they checked in at Ricks College on Saturday morning. Although it was a short visit, it was wonderful to have some quiet time with Maureen to talk through how things are going for them and theirs. Their daughter, Laurel, will be graduating from high school in December and she will be joining Tenille at Ricks. Hopefully by then the family will be relocated to Billings and things a little more settled.

Ryan and Chelsea continue to battle the effects of his Crohn's disease although the doctors have given them hope that it can be controlled. It has certainly been a trial by fire for them as they have grappled with all the physical and emotional demands. Chad and Trish are still in Seattle but are planning on relocating to Billings next spring. Keith and Maggie are enjoying Wisconsin and spent a few days in Richland helping Nate finish up things in the house so that they could get it on the market. Relocating is such a job and even more complicated when you are moving

your business with you as Nate is doing. It will be nice to have them a little closer.

I received inquiries from several of you regarding Steph's status as far as her move. I knew that I would hear from her just as soon as their phone was installed but I wasn't sure how long it would take. Saturday she called and she sounded happy, relieved, and grateful to have the week over and everything coming together.

The whole neighborhood was like a beehive with all the homes completed and the new excited owners moving in. She said that everyone was anxious to get acquainted and it made for a nice welcome. Their ward is growing by leaps and bounds because of all the new housing developments. It reminded me of the situation Steve and Bonnie are in with their ward and stake in Tooele. Katie and Sam registered for school on Thursday and the situation there seemed to meet with Steph's approval.

Jeanie and Scott had a wonderful weekend with Julianne's mission homecoming on Sunday, Christian receiving his mission call, (Des Moines, Iowa) and Bethany getting baptized! What a payday for Scott and Jeanie. Julianne is headed for BYU and Maren to U. of Utah. Christian will be working until his departure date. He and Paul have been such close friends over the last several years and it will be special for them to share their missions.

Uncle Charles drove Tara and Sean to Provo last week and had a chance to spend some time with Grandpa and Grandma Richards. Tiffany is going to school in northern Idaho in nursing and she will be married in the Salt Lake Temple in November.

We will be holding Paul's farewell on Sunday, September 14th at 11:00. Those of you who can come are invited to sing a couple songs with the family on the program. We are trying to get things figured out. We completed the last of his mission shopping yesterday.

Rachel is spending the week here in Idaho with her two grandmas, aunts and uncles. We have had her here yesterday and today and she seems to be doing fine. She announced this morning that she needed to call her Dad and Mom as well as Nate and Christine. When we got them on the line, she was especially anxious to talk to Nathan. Bonnie expressed amazement at that since they have a typical toddler-sibling relationship with it's ups and downs. I guess it's true that "absence makes the heart grow fonder" because she was so excited to talk to him and she told me later that he had blown her some kisses over the phone.

September 8, 1997

[Mom] We had a full and rewarding weekend. On Friday evening Jeanie and Christian arrived from Show Low. They were full of good news and thrilled with a "triple header" weekend; Bethany's baptism, Christian's piano recital, and Julianne's mission homecoming. It was especially nice that Grandpa and Grandma Larsen were able to spend the weekend in Show Low with them and be a part of the festivities. Last Tuesday Jeanie and Christian drove Julianne to Provo and helped her get moved in and settled. There was the usual list of things to do to be ready for the semester and they spent most of the day in Provo taking care of business.

They then proceeded on to Salt Lake where they helped Maren get situated at the University of Utah. They were able to visit en route with Jennifer and James who now run a carpet cleaning business in Provo and also spend some time with Aunt Karen in Layton. It was so nice to have time to rehearse with them the events of the last few weeks and to hear some of Christian's

piano pieces. He is very talented and we enjoyed having our own personal recital.

Although Tim and I left early Saturday morning for a temple baptismal trip, Jeanie stayed until Sunday morning and so we had lots of time to visit and catch up on family news. It's hard to believe that when Christian leaves on his mission, they will only have three children left at home. It's amazing how drastically life can change from year to year! Christian and Paul spent some quality time together and double-dated. He enters the MTC three days after Paul leaves for El Salvador so chances are pretty good that they won't be seeing each other for a full two years. We have wondered if he might serve in Shauntel and Randy's stake or if Des Moines is in a different mission.

Paul has only five days left before he puts aside his levis and work boots and dons his shirt, dress pants and ties. He is being released as stake single adult leader and his Primary teaching days are over for a while. He and Tim have been home teaching companions and Paul has been a regular at taking the missionaries on splits, even working in the LDS fair booth last week. He has had a busy summer and earned a lot of love and respect from the people of our ward and stake.

SaraKay and Tim are going to miss him, too. Nearly every night and some early mornings, Paul can be found sitting at Tim's side tutoring him in his Pre-Calculus. He has been invaluable to Tim as he has struggled to grasp the concepts. Paul has gone out of his way to read to SaraKay this summer and spent many hours on the trampoline with her.

Last night I had a headache and I decided to go to bed early. I took a hot bath and got in my nightie. When I came out of the bathroom, SaraKay was laying on the bed reading to Paul. I made them scoot over and I laid down. Soon Tim came in and joined us and the bed was nearly full. Daddy was on the phone and before long he came in to go to bed and discovered that there was "no room at the inn". We were all talking and laughing, lying there in the dark.

It's times like that that I realize just how blessed we are to have sweet relationships and such good times as a family. Every time we end up on the bed in one of those sessions, I think about Grandma Larsen's buying that bedspread for us years ago and then instructing me that we were not to ruin it by sitting or lying on it. She might as well have said, "Don't breathe" as to tell us not to congregate on the bed, late at night, laughing and visiting. We have enjoyed the beautiful bedspread and I think it's held up remarkably well considering the workout it's had.

Daddy is in Idaho Falls this morning at a staff meeting. He has a major event this Thursday for all big contributors to scouting. He wasn't so tied to the fair booth this year and there wasn't a single shift that wasn't filled. That was nice for me since I am "on call" all week.

Tonight we are going to spend home evening at the booth doing the final clean-up. It feels good to have it over for another year. I took SaraKay in for carnival rides on Wednesday and we had a great time. We had invited her friend, Karina Jenks, to come along and they ran from ride to ride, pretty much able to take care of themselves.

Tim is still battling his skin and trying to do all he can to get through this. I had to admire him yesterday despite his self-consciousness he administered to the sacrament, sang in a men's choir for sacrament meeting, accompanied in Priesthood meeting, and attended choir practice with us, the only teen-age boy present. He has a lot of grit and constantly impresses me with his determination to do

what is right. Last Tuesday he went in for a physical for cross-country and before he arrived home I received a phone call from the doctor informing me that Tim had a hernia and would need surgery; the sooner the better. I couldn't believe it! When he arrived home from his doctor visit, he said, "What next!" He said that as he was going into the clinic, the thought crossed his mind that he surely didn't need anything else to happen in his life right now.

When the doctor broke the news to him about surgery, he couldn't help but shake his head and smile. The doctor was a little puzzled by his response and commented that this was a serious problem and needed his attention. Dr. Carrigan didn't realize that Tim was just shaking his head in disbelief that another setback had come his way. He won't be running cross-county for the remainder of the season, will miss part of harvest recovering from the surgery, but hopefully will feel well enough to try out for basketball in November. Never a dull moment. His appointment with the surgeon will be September 16 and surgery probably will be that weekend.

Last night as I visited with John and Laurel, they told me about their Sabbath's activities and the thrill of bringing people into full activity in the church. Later David told me of a member he is working with to get to the temple. It reminded me of the last time Steve was here and he told me about his home teaching family that were so poor they didn't even have beds for the children. He was pulling some things together to help them through a tough time.

I couldn't help thinking how wonderful it is to share in the work of the kingdom and to see peoples' lives change because of the gospel. How blessed we are to be able to participate in the church programs.

[Dad] Well, it is over for another year. Tiger Ear and the EISF has come and gone. As Sue indicated, we had a lot better response in filling shifts. It was nice to feel freer. It seemed like the crowds at the fair were a little lighter and we were down about $1800 compared to last year. However, we have made some good changes in the set-up and flow and they proved to be very efficient. I figure the value of each volunteer's shift is worth about $75 to the council. We had quite a few expenses associated with the remodeling but I think we are going to be able to operate for quite a few years before having to make any more changes.

For my Sunday School class we were talking about the saints being driven from Jackson County, Missouri and that many of them were probably questioning their faith and their prophet, and wondering "why me?"

We discussed situations in our lives that might cause us to have the same questions today. I concluded that any such doubting would probably come because of a) circumstances beyond our control, such as flood, weather, or other natural disasters; or b) because of the actions of others. I could think of several such examples in my life and was able to share with them my feelings and response.

It helped to reaffirm my testimony and the effectiveness of faith and prayer to endure and overcome. How grateful I am for the rich heritage I have in the Gospel and the faith and works of pioneer forefathers (living and dead) who have made it possible for me to enjoy the comforts of a Church for the times, and a gospel which teaches how to find peace and solace.

September 15, 1997

[Mom] It feels good to be on this end of last week. We had a rewarding time yesterday with Paul's farewell and dinner. We fed around 50. Thank goodness for family members who helped with the meal. We

served the traditional beef brisket and Daddy's Dutch oven potatoes. Guests brought salads, chips, and rolls, and we had ice cream sundaes for dessert. Maren and Julianne came from Utah with John and Laurel on Saturday evening and Curtis Cheney and Tenille came from Rexburg Sunday morning to be with us. Steve and Bonnie arrived Saturday evening and Becky and Chet came and we practiced our musical numbers for the program and visited.

Aunt Karen and her three children spent Saturday night with Gary and Linda and Karen accompanied the musical numbers. We really appreciated her help since the one number was very difficult. We included Maren and Julianne in the musical number and they helped Bonnie with the soprano. It was fun performing together and we had a lot of compliments. The men sang a four-part men's song, "Arise, Oh Men of God". I am so impressed with our sweet cousins from both sides of this family and appreciated their efforts to be with us for this occasion.

It was sweet for Paul to have so many friends and family gather for his farewell. The chapel was filled to capacity and many of his Ricks College friends came to wish him well. Tim, Paul, Daddy, and I gave talks and the family did two musical numbers. Paul asked Bruce Lake (his summer boss) and Marlene Acevedo (Sunday School teacher) to give the prayers. The topic was service.

At the dinner we were able to meet many of Paul's associates from Ricks and one fellow who had worked with him at the Salmon River High Adventure Base, Steve Jorde. He seemed to enjoy being here for the dinner although he came alone and didn't fit with any particular group. Later Paul mentioned to me that Steve wasn't a member of the Church. It surprised me because some of the comments he made regarding Paul being the camp's "religious leader" the previous summer led me to believe that he was. I thought it was very sweet of him to respond to Paul's invitation to join us for the day.

The only thing missing from the day's festivities was all of Paul's male friends. Paul had his share of girlfriends but the boys were noticeably absent because one by one they have all left on missions. Paul is the last.

It's made for a long summer but thank goodness Paul has kept busy with work and church and it has passed quicker than we thought it would. He is downstairs right now writing thank you notes and finishing up his preparations for leaving. Late last night before going to bed, Paul and Daddy and I visited for a few minutes about some of the exchanges we had at sacrament meeting and the comments people made about Paul and his impact on their lives. It was a rewarding day for all of us.

We will be going to Provo Wednesday to check him in at the MTC at 2:00. We appreciate those who came to spend the weekend with us and all who have called to show support. We especially missed both sets of grandparents but realize that they would have been here with us if they could have. Sometimes I wonder if I will ever get old enough to stop missing our parents! They are such an important part of our lives!

Last Friday Grandma Richards called with some very sad news regarding Chad and Trish. Their three-month-old daughter, Emily, has been sickly ever since birth but they couldn't seem to find out what was wrong. When they took her in last week she was very anemic and after doing extensive testing, they discovered she has cystic fibrosis. It was a such a shock and difficult news.

I phoned Maureen and Nathan and talked with them about how things are going and what is ahead for Emily. Apparently there

has been a lot of research done in the last 20 years that has improved the lives of those suffering with this disease. It used to be that children would die very young because it affected their digestive system and they couldn't get nourishment but researchers discovered an enzyme that can be introduced into the digestive system that aids the patient in digesting food. Emily will be on a special diet but for the most part, the digestive problems affiliated with the disease have been eradicated.

The more serious problems are those that develop with the lungs. The lungs produce phlegm and are not able to function unless it is removed and so Trish is being trained in procedures of working with Emily to physically dislodge the phlegm and get it drained off so she can breathe. This must be done 2-3 times a day for the rest of her life. The disease will not affect Emily mentally and she will be able to attend school and participate in some physical activities.

Maureen said that eventually the lung problems will cause scar tissue to develop and this wears out and damages the lungs beyond repair. Some patients have lived to their early 20's but many die young depending on the severity of their condition. It is certainly a life altering situation for the entire family.

Another aspect of this condition is that it is genetically transmitted and so the two older children are going in for testing to see if they have any signs of it. It's usually discovered by the time a child is three and Michaela is almost four so that is very encouraging. Nathan is almost two and he has not shown any symptoms either. They would appreciate everyone's faith and prayers in their behalf.

When I first heard the news, my thoughts turned to Nate and Maureen and the many trials they have endured. They are certainly an example of faith and long suffering in the face of adversity. I admire them so much.

On a lighter note: Tim returned home the other day saying, "I have some good news and some bad news. I have been nominated for Junior class Homecoming Royalty."

It's good news because it's an honor to be nominated but bad news because he is supposed to be having surgery the day they announce the winners. We aren't exactly sure what to do and won't know until we meet with the surgeon tomorrow.

Tim wants an excuse to not go to the dance because he doesn't like anyone well enough to spend that kind of money on her, but he also feels obligated to participate now that he has been nominated. He doesn't want to delay the surgery or he will not be able to work any of harvest but on the other hand, who knows just how long the recovery will take and maybe he will get along better than expected.

On the other hand, if he doesn't win, he doesn't want to be at the game to hear it announced and being in surgery would be a great excuse to be absent.

On the other hand, one of the student body officers has offered to secretly tell him in advance if he has won if he will make a hemp necklace for her and then he would know whether to schedule surgery or not. On the other hand.....what a zoo!

We are in the process of replacing our furnace. Daddy is so clever at doing things like this so he picked up the parts on Friday and has nearly got it completed. In the meantime, he thoroughly cleaned out the furnace room and rebuilt the wood box. He is such a good handyman and can fix nearly everything. We are hopeful that this new furnace will cut some heating costs and enable us to heat the house a little more effectively. We would like to wean

ourselves away from the wood burning stove since we need to paint the basement and do some upgrading. Burning wood is pretty tough on the ceiling and walls.

[Dad] Mom covered the details of last weekend very well. It was truly a rewarding time! But I thought it would be getting easier with as many missionaries as we have sent, but it is getting harder. I could hardly control my emotions to get through my talk on Sunday. Paul gave a beautiful talk--he sounded more like an experienced returned missionary than one just leaving. It was gratifying to see the outpouring of love from so many friends and neighbors and realize that people have seen and felt what is really there within his soul.

For part of my talk I used Mike's letter to Paul that had come on Saturday. His statement, *"I want to serve with everything I've got as if every day were my last"* was especially appropriate for the subject of the day. I couldn't help but think about the growth Mike has seen as I read, *"The mission has been a lot different than I thought. It's changed me--I'm a better person. That's probably been the hardest part for me is to accept that the frustrations I have are for my own good. Our Heavenly Father knows us. He knows how to help us progress and become more like Him."*

The struggles with companions and frustrations he has experienced have really helped him to grow in ways nothing else could. Mike was right--Heavenly Father does know us and I believe he is more involved in our lives than we give Him credit.

Last night for home evening we talked about missions--what are they, who is a missionary, what to do to prepare, and what is the hardest thing about going. It was fun to each mention something about Paul that we thought showed the kind of missionary he will be. I think we were all touched by the feelings expressed and then I gave him a father's blessing. The reality of his leaving was finally settling in----.

Last week, was mostly tied up with preparations for the Scouting Heritage Society Annual Recognition Dinner and Report which was held at Kathie Jones' home in Idaho Falls. She is the former wife of young Dr. Rheam Jones and has a beautiful home on the south side of town. We had RSVP's from 55 people and planned on having the event on her huge deck. The weather turned ugly, not everyone showed, and she graciously opened her home for our meeting. We had Ricks College cater the dinner and it was wonderful! We also had a group called Jacob's Jamboree provide some entertainment. They are former Ricks students and have been performing for the summers at Mountain River Ranch and were very good. All in all, it was a delightful evening.

September 22, 1997

[Mom] It's the first day of spud harvest but you wouldn't know it by the activities around our house. It rained so much yesterday that it's too wet to dig spuds and so things are pretty quiet throughout the community. Tim is going in tomorrow morning at 6 for his surgery and so today he is getting all of his lawn's mowed. It was so wet and foggy this morning that he wasn't able to do anything until noon but the sun is shining now and he has hopes of getting them all finished before nightfall.

When he went in last week for his pre-op testing and exam, the doctor made it clear that he was not to plan on work of any kind for the first two weeks and no lifting and exerting for six weeks. He said that any violation of that rule and Tim might have to have the entire procedure repeated. He said that Tim will feel miserable enough at first that we won't need to worry about him

being too energetic but after about two weeks, he will feel pretty good and be tempted to carry on as he is accustomed to doing and that just can't happen or the stitching will pull out and have to be redone. I've tried to think of some "low impact" activities that he could do but it's amazing how few things there are that don't involve lifting of some sort.

Wednesday was a memorable day for Paul. We left here about 6:30 am and took Tim to Bingham Memorial Hospital for some blood tests before he left to go to school that morning.

The Homecoming coronation assembly rehearsal was at 7:30 a.m. and the assembly at 8:30. He had to have an adult with him for the tests at the hospital and we hoped to get the tests done, get Tim on his way to his rehearsal, and then Daddy, Paul and I on our way to Provo. Everything went as planned and we finished up at the hospital by 7:00. Before leaving we took some pictures of Paul and Tim in front of the "Bingham Memorial" sign. We thought it would be an interesting story to tell their posterity in years to come.

Paul was as ready to go as any missionary we've sent. Having all summer to prepare and being the last of his group to go made him "antsy" to get on his way. He is by nature such an organized person that I hardly had to do anything but go over his lists occasionally and confirm that what he had done was correct. He had carefully studied every letter of instruction that he had received and made notes to himself and timetables of just exactly what needed to happen and when. The only glitch in the entire process happened Tuesday when he went to Idaho Falls to get his suit altered and he locked his keys in the car. He had a list of things he was going to get done that morning including visiting Becky and Chet at their workplaces and taking Alison to lunch one last time. Locking his keys in the car was definitely not on his list and it threw him for a loop. Daddy was in Pocatello for the day and I didn't have a car so he worked out something with Alison's family who were very gracious and sweet to him. The only problem was that he couldn't reach them for a couple of hours so he wandered around the mall in the meantime. It was frustrating to spend his last day here wandering the mall and carousing in Pet City.

On our way to Provo we stopped and had lunch with Grandpa and Grandma Richards. We took lots of pictures and had a nice visit. Following this we went to VF Outlet to exchange some shoes and hurried on to Provo and the MTC. It was fun to have Steve and Bonnie and Christine there to join us in our good-byes' and also John, Laurel, and Grant (Laurel's brother who is now a freshman at the "Y" and looking forward to his own mission).

Some of you have asked if it is getting easier or harder to send another missionary. It's hard to be separated for two years, but easy in that I know how much Paul has longed for this time and has prepared and, from past experience, I know how quickly the time will pass for all of us. Having had so many older brothers and a sister serve missions, Paul has a good feel for the realities of missionary life and its trials. I know the first few months are really stressful and he needs our faith and prayers.

Last Friday I went downstairs for something and wandered into his bedroom and looked around. Everything was clean and in order. His desk lamp, pencil holder and alarm clock were in their usual place, the bed made, and his pictures of the prophets still hanging on the wall. All at once the reality of it hit me! Paul, sweet Paul, number #5 son is finally a missionary! Talk about mixed emotions! How we'll miss him!

Friday night we attended the Homecoming game and watched proudly as Tim was

announced as the junior class Homecoming Prince. He and the other nominees rode onto the field in golf carts accompanied by princess nominees. He had been worried that he wouldn't know how to drive it but he did fine. Following the game, it started to rain and it just poured for several hours. We were fortunate that the entire festivities of the evening including a dinner, game, half- time activities, etc. had all been completed before it started to pour. (Mom didn't mention that Snake River beat Shelley that night, 43 to 13!)

I mentioned in last week's letter that Chad and Trish's other two children were being tested for cystic fibrosis. What a relief to find out that they do not have it! Grandma Richards said that Chad called to tell her the news and that he was very upbeat and encouraged. Emily has been tested and she appears to be doing well and they are all very hopeful that with her special diet and other treatments, she can be cared for at home and lead a fairly normal life.

[Dad] Last week was a little more casual for cleaning up my office and the remains of several projects. Wednesday was a truly memorable day as we took Paul to the MTC. When we stopped in SLC and visited with Grandma & Grandpa Richards they seemed more settled in their condo. Arch seemed stronger and steadier on his feet than he has for months. The MTC experience with Paul was quite a bit different than it was with Steve and Dave. The Church has learned how to move people through that emotional experience with dispatch and efficiency. How grateful I have been for the time we have had with Paul this summer. It was like getting to know him all over again and appreciate the depths of his testimony, talents, commitment, humor, and intellect. What a marvelous missionary he will be!

After saying goodbye to everyone, Sue and I went to the Masada and Dead Sea Scroll exhibit. The next day was the last one for the exhibit, so we were really fortunate to be able to go. It was so impressive to have that insight into the lives and times of those people. The standard of living they had was much greater than I had imagined. The depth of commitment to freedom and their religious beliefs was incredible. The discipline and creativity of the Roman army was also impressive.

Saturday was mostly taken up with a 90-day reunion for our Wood Badge course. It was great to see many of the wonderful people that had come on course and to see the progress they were making toward their goals. It was also gratifying to sense how much they had learned from the course and how committed they were to putting it into practice. I am beginning to be more concerned about the task ahead of me of choosing and recruiting a staff for next year's course. I know how important the chemistry and talents of that group are in making for a successful course.

Another major event Saturday, was going out to Taber to visit with Norma and Jesse Griffiths as they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. It was good to see most of their kids and their families and to reflect on where we have come from since moving out there leventy zillion years ago!

The balance of the day, I spent on the furnace project and coupled with the effort last night, I am just about finished. That has been an interesting and learning experience. I really feel that with my personal attention to detail that this installation is much better and will last a lot longer than the original one.

One little incident marred my progress last night. I was trying to finish off the venting and was working with some heavy PVC pipe up in between the beams in the ceiling and pulled wrong with my left arm extended and dislocated my shoulder. It has been a long time since I did that last. Needless to

say, it was quite painful, but with your mother's help I was able to get some Ibuprofen, tie a weight in my hand, lie on the bar with my arm hanging down, and eventually persuade the muscles in my shoulder and arm to relax enough for it to rotate into place.

Fortunately, we didn't have to make a midnight trip to the hospital to get it back into place. However, I am quite tender and moving carefully today.

September 30, 1997

[Dad] Recently, while I was riding my exercise bike downstairs, I noticed that the peddle on one side seemed a little loose. So when I was through riding I checked the peddle to see if I could tighten it up. It was loose because I had actually sheared off the one side of the main crankshaft! What power! But unfortunately, I haven't been able to get it fixed yet and have really missed that part of my exercise program.

Last week I finally got back some more of the Jamboree pictures I took this summer. It was nice to relive the feelings of Gettysburg, the Amish farms, and other sights. But the picture Tim likes best was with me sitting next to Newt Gingrich in the theater at the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum.

I've been working on the Trails lately and it's starting to come together. Rick has most of it now and is working on the formatting and typesetting. Hopefully we can pull things together to get it printed and mailed this week before we head to Salt Lake for the Larsen Lawn & Blessing Day. We are looking forward to that experience--especially Tim, because he will get to go to the BYU game with Utah State on Friday night and mostly supervise on the lawn project because he can't lift anything. (Actually, it is nearly driving him crazy not to be able to do anything. It's hard on him to not be making big money this harvest vacation.)

Sue and I had a little get-away last weekend. There was an Area 2 (all of the councils in Utah and Idaho) meeting in Ogden that I needed to go to because there was an Endowment development department. We were able to stay in the Ogden Park Hotel, eat a wonderful meal, and enjoy the time together. I've really grown to appreciate the depth of the tender feelings between us and the joy we have in being together. It was a good meeting and I came away with some ideas that should prove helpful.

Another project that I got involved in over the weekend was cleaning out my file cabinet. I have two drawers full of articles, talks, and gleanings over the years that mostly just sit there. Most of the filings are from my high school and college years and it is so outdated that your mother persuaded me to go through it and throw most of it away. I have found that she was right--most of the material is so dated, even Church pamphlets and articles and talks, that it is not worth holding on to anymore.

Today, the inspector is coming to check out my work on the furnace. I feel good about my installation and it has worked to take the chill off of a couple cold mornings, but I will feel better after it has his stamp of approval.

[Mom] A few days ago while visiting with Steve (Jr) about the upcoming events, he asked me if things had calmed down for me yet. It was nice to report that life has been a lot quieter lately and that I was enjoying the chance to relax and do some things before winter sets in. Although I don't enjoy battling the icy roads and cold weather, I do enjoy the early evenings and the freedom from yard and garden demands. It's such a cozy feeling to have our family gather in the evening for a meal, have some quiet time, and let the weather

isolate us from the harried pace of things. I especially enjoy it if we have secured things outside and can know that despite the weather, we are safe and secure.

Part of my "harvest" ritual is the yearly washing of the windows. That is what I've been doing the last few days and it is so satisfying to have the runners vacuumed, the curtains cleaned, and the windows sparkling. It is a task that requires good weather because the entire window except for one pane needs to be lifted out and cleaned. I set a goal to do at least two a day which doesn't seem like much but they are so big and heavy and time-consuming that it takes me almost an hour per window.

Harvest is a nice time to do it with the reduction in outside activities. The whole community shuts down for two weeks; no meetings except on Sunday and no school or activities for the children. This harvest has been especially quiet since Tim hasn't been working and pretty much spends his days resting. He seems to be recovering nicely from his surgery but Sunday after spending part of the day at church, he was hurting and feeling the effects of being on his feet too much. We've been grateful that he has had this time to heal and hopefully will be able to get back into things come Monday.

We received word from our "undercover agent" at the MTC (Laurel) that she had seen Paul and visited with him yesterday and he was excited and pleased with life as a missionary. (He also had a list of things he needs for the MTC: 2 T-shirts, a coat, and candy.) It's nice to have her working there and able to keep us posted on things.

It's always interesting to see the MTC from another missionary's perspective. We've had six missionaries receive training in the MTC but Paul is the only one to write about the toilet's flushing "with a vengeance." Maybe the church buys all its toilets from the same supplier because the toilets in the Idaho Falls Temple are that same way. I've often thought that if someone was sitting on the toilet and it flushed, they would be sucked under, never to be seen again.

On a more spiritual note, I was pleased at his comment regarding the scriptures. He has always been a student of the scriptures and it didn't surprise me that he was relishing the opportunity to be instructed more fully in them.

While we are in Salt Lake for Steve and Bonnie's big day, we are meeting Mike's Chihuahua friend who is bringing some things when he comes to conference that Mike needed stored. Hope we can make the connections with him and send back a birthday gift for Mike. I told Daddy last night that I can feel the "emotional pulling away" that Mike is doing right now as he feels more confident and able to fulfill his missionary duties. His letters are informative but I don't get the feeling of struggle that I felt for so much of the early months.

While I was in the hospital with Tim following his surgery, I had a chance to catch up on some reading and I came across an article on "Road Rage". Although I've read quite a few of these kinds of articles, I was interested that this one gave some tips for preventing an incident from escalating into something deadly. I thought I would include it since it seems like many of you spend a good deal of time commuting and sharing the roadways with all kinds of people.

Let me preface the article with a story of a time when Daddy and Becky and I were involved in this kind of situation. We were in Nampa for an Elk's Lodge Hoop Shoot competition and driving around trying to find the location of the event. We were reading road signs and trying to navigate to the destination. We pulled up to a stop

light and into the left turn lane. When the light turned green, Daddy made the turn, and drove into the far right hand lane against the parked cars. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a large pickup tailgating us and when I turned around to see what was going on, I realized that there were two turn lanes and that we had stopped in the far left one but as we proceeded to turn we had pulled into the second one directly in front of a pickup who was also turning. Our mistake had nearly forced him into the line of parked cars.

He honked and gestured to us and we continued on, feeling foolish about our mistake, but hoping that he would notice our license plates and realize that we were strangers to the area and unfamiliar with the streets. About a block away, we stopped at another intersection filled with traffic. All at once I saw the driver of the pick-up, an enormous bearded fellow in a tank top, stop behind us, jump out of his vehicle, and run up to Daddy's car door. This was all done right in the middle of a busy intersection.

Seconds before he opened the door, anticipating what was about to happen, I said to Daddy, "A soft answer turneth away wrath." As the door opened, the fellow, enraged and out of control, reached in to grab Daddy, all the while yelling obscenities at us. Daddy calmly apologized amid the tirade, hoping to defuse the situation. For whatever reason, (I think he was taken aback by Daddy's size) the fellow didn't grab Daddy, but put both hands on the car door and slammed it closed so violently that I thought every window in the car would break! The light turned green and we proceeded to our destination, shaken but grateful that nothing more serious hadn't transpired. It was all so unbelievable that someone could become so violent so quickly and that we could have been the object of his rage.

While visiting with Shauntel the other day she commented that they are in the thick of filling out forms to apply for residencies for Randy. What a job. Hopefully they can get into a program that won't be quite so far away.

Randy's brother, Matt, is marrying a girl from Dallas and Randy's family will be going there for the wedding in that temple. Shauntel and Randy are thinking about making the trip for the wedding and spending some time at Dave and Andrea's. It will work well because it will be during the Christmas break. I hope they can put something like that together and give them both a touch of family over the holidays.

October 6, 1997

We spent a productive and enjoyable weekend with Steve and Bonnie. They had extended an invitation to both sides of the family to join them on Saturday for a work party and also to participate in blessing Christine. We decided to include the BYU/Utah State football game in our plans and so Tim rode with Steve and Bonnie to Provo and went to the game with John. Steve and Bonnie had reserved a block of seats for their group and Daddy and I offered to watch the kids and watch the game on TV if Steve and Bonnie would deliver Tim to John and Laurel's so he could go to the game and spend the night there with them. Laurel had a mission reunion on Friday so she didn't attend the game, but she graciously shared John for the night and he and Tim had a great time.

Meanwhile back at the ranch.....Daddy and I kept busy feeding Christine and entertaining Nathan while Rachel and SaraKay played. Nathan thought he had found a great friend in Daddy and the two of them romped together until Daddy got tired and we put him (Nathan) to bed for the night. The game was one of the most exciting ones of the season. We were

grateful that Tim got to go and especially to one that was such a thriller.

Saturday morning we donned our work clothes and began leveling and raking the yard in preparation for laying sod. Steve had already done a lot of work raking up rocks and smoothing the topsoil that had been delivered a few days before. Before long the Bensons arrived and it was a real beehive of activity. Bonnie and her mother and sisters took care of the children inside and finished the final preparations for the dinner. We had several radios going outside and were able to listen to conference as we worked. At noon the whole bunch (after a quick wash-up and change of clothes) went to the church for the blessing and a tasty dinner. Bonnie had invited their bishopric and home and visiting teachers to join them for the event and it was a lovely occasion.

Christine is a good-natured, beautiful baby and it was very sweet to be able to share the occasion of her blessing with so many family members from both sides. Following the meal, the men headed for home and continued laying sod and the women cleaned things up at the church. By the time we did dishes and gathered up the children, it was time for the afternoon session of conference and we continued with the yard project while we listened. By four o'clock the last sod was laid! What an accomplishment! We all were dirty and tired but so pleased to see it come together.

Daddy, Steve, John, and Tim attended the Priesthood session together and Bonnie, Laurel, and I bathed kids, did a little laundry and just sat on the front step visiting in the warm summer evening. Later Daddy and the boys brought home the traditional ice cream treat and we had a chance to sit around and talk about conference and announcements made by President Hinckley regarding upcoming changes.

When we got the mail yesterday, I saw two letters from E. Larsen and assumed we had gotten two from Mike. When I opened them I realized one was from Paul. We appreciate Laurel's watch care over Paul in the MTC. She reported that he is doing well and thriving. On our way home Sunday, we delivered a birthday package for Mike to an address in Salt Lake where his friend, Bishop Guy, from Chihuahua was staying. Mike sent two souvenirs with his friend; a large sombrero that someone had given him and a pottery water jug that he purchased. Both items would have been very hard to ship or carry home.

Last week was a busy one for Daddy as he finished up the Trails and worked with Rick to get it ready for printing. We will be putting out the mailing Wednesday so I'm reserving the day for that project. My week was spent washing windows and doing some thorough cleaning downstairs. We are discarding and sorting through things in preparation for some painting we hope to get done.

The inspector for the new furnace came and gave us the go-ahead to use it. He said that Daddy's installation job was one of the best he had ever seen. It is great to know that we have it all ready to go for cold weather thanks to Daddy's talent and efforts.

The kids returned to school today and harvest is over for another year. It was hard for Tim to get back into things after this two week break. He has strict instructions: no lifting and carrying things. He is going to have to depend on friends to help him with his backpack between classes. He is still on the acne medication and although we had hoped that it would have made a big difference by now, he still is battling the blemishes and feeling self-conscious about it. It has been quite a trial for him these past two months and I've admired his patience with the situation. I think his underlying worry is that by the time he is

able to get his strength back from the effects of the medication and the surgery, he will only have a few days before basketball tryouts and he just doesn't see how he can make up for all the lost time. It has been hard to see him struggling with all this. It was easier to cope with during harvest when he was here at home but now that school has started, it is there to face again. He has appreciated the support he has felt from each of you.

[Dad] We had a staff meeting yesterday and the Scout Executive, Kim Hansen, handed out a new sheet of assignments for next year. It seems that the Trails responsibility will pass to someone else. This issue and one more to put together and mail. I don't know what I'll do for a family bonding experience without sharing that responsibility.

I'm sure you all were touched as we were with the messages of conference and the sensitivity of the Brethren to the needs of families and new converts especially. It was nice to go to the Priesthood session with ½ of my sons. We were particularly pleased with Pres. Hinckley's message about the new mini-temples. One of the three new temples announced was in the Colonies of Mexico, so near to where Mike is serving. I remember the recent letter from him about the sacrifices the saints there make to get to the temple.

Speaking of a family bonding work experience--Steve & Bonnie's lawn was a great one. The fourteen pallets of sod were the easily recognizable landmark for finding their place on Friday. After the efforts by so many family members on Saturday, every piece of sod was laid and we were about 10 pieces short of being able to totally complete the job. It was amazing how their yard grew as we worked. I used to think they had such a tiny little yard but with all the sod laid, it looked really big. I know it's going to be such a boon for their children to play in.

I was reading an article entitled "Is the Public Trust Dead?" that was an interview with Amitai Etzioni, University Professor at George Washington University; William Gorham, president of The Urban Institute; and Dick Thornburgh, former governor of Pennsylvania and Attorney General under Reagan and Bush.

The magazine asked the question: "The economy is booming; the nation is at peace. Yet, if you listen to radio talk shows, you hear a lot of anger toward the government, as well as mistrust. What are people angry about?" Etzioni replied, "They are angry because they have lost their guideposts for daily living....Nobody knows how to act properly anymore....When you ask people separately about the economy and about the moral standard of society, they are four times more pessimistic about the moral side than about the economic side. Every survey we see reports that between 60 and 80 percent of the public are troubled about the moral condition of the country.

Dick Thornburgh added: "It seems to me that we Americans enjoyed a continuity of values, in a broad sense, from the beginning of the Republic until the 1960s. We had moorings to which people could attach their lives, established rubrics under which they could conduct themselves. Since the 1960s, many of those moorings and rubrics have been destroyed, and no substitutes have emerged.

We have not affected a transition to new values. Even people who never knew the era before the 1960s have an inherent longing for some moorings in life. For instance, when you increasingly have no rules with respect to sexual conduct, when marriages bust up as quickly as they are created, you have undermined a core value, and have created confusion among the body politic. The reason for the public's alienation from institutions is that they expect these institutions to provide them

with rules....at least some broad sense of right and wrong. The public is not getting that. As a result, we have this odd kind of "yin and yang" out there. People want to be free, want to exercise their rights as they perceive those rights to be, and yet they have a real longing for guidance that they aren't finding anywhere."

If these gentlemen could have been a part of conference over this weekend, they would have recognized that there is an institution under divine guidance providing moorings, rubrics, values, and rules. These are based on eternal verities and satisfy the innate yearnings of the souls of men. Those values are timeless, and they are reiterated at a time when there is an intense need for the security and peace that can come from mooring in that safe harbor through the storms and vicissitudes of this age we live in.

That, I believe, has a lot to do with the media's interest in the Church's celebrations of its pioneer heritage. What kind of institution evokes that kind of allegiance? What motivation can drive so many people to make that kind of personal sacrifice and trek? What values drive a people that are so unique in a society tossed and torn by every whim and fancy? What a joy it is to be a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ and His true Church. Sweet is the peace the Gospel brings because we know--we know where we came from, we know why we are here, we know what happens when we leave this earth, and we know it is true.

October 12, 1997

[Mom] It's been cold and blustery for the last several days and we've even had some snow but the forecast is for things to warm up soon. Hopefully we can have time to gather in apples and finish getting our outside work done.

I did some phoning last night and when I talked to Shauntel she mentioned that she had received an e-mail from Mindy telling her that she had delivered twins Saturday night. Few of the details were included in the message so I called and visited with Gary this morning and he filled me in on what had happened.

Mindy went into labor Saturday night and she delivered a boy, Connor, 3#11 oz. and a little girl, Kassidy, 3# 13oz. Both babies are doing well although the little boy is stronger. The nurse told Gary that two requirements must be met before the babies can go home: they must be able to nurse on their own and they must be able to maintain their own body heat. They are lying in heated isolets for now and gradually over the next few days or weeks, the temperature in the islets will be reduced and if the babies can maintain their body temperature at 98 degrees, then they can take them home.

It was a little frightening when the little girl was born because she was black and blue but following the birth her coloring improved and she is strengthening. It is such a blessing that both babies survived and are doing well.

Steph and Linds are loving their new home and pleased with their new ward and neighborhood. They spent Saturday constructing a retaining wall (thirty 75 lb. Blocks) and have ordered the parts for a sprinkling system. Linds is the mastermind behind the projects and has put in a lot of hours after work as well as on weekends. Steph was called to teach the Relief Society Home Management lesson and includes in her weekly schedule eight piano students.

Shauntel and Randy completed the last of his residency applications last week and got them in the mailed off. He applied at about 20 programs across the nation including two in Washington, one in

Oregon, one in Utah and in New Mexico. They also applied for one in Dallas and several in the Iowa area. Randy will be doing interviewing in December and January and hopefully by March they will know where they will be living for the next few years. He has chosen to specialize in radiology and was pleased to have several of his professors offer to write him letters of recommendation.

Jonie was at work when I called but Jeff says things are going well for them. As many of you are aware, Jonie lost a baby about a year ago because of a problem with her cervix. Last July she had surgery to close it up so she could carry a baby full term. Jeff said that at her last check-up the doctor indicated that she may have to stay in bed as she gets closer to her due date so that she doesn't go into labor prematurely again. We hope all will go well for her in these upcoming months.

Steve left this morning for a business trip and will be back Thursday evening. It is quite a challenge for Bonnie to handle the home front alone but she was optimistic and said that she had offers for help from visiting teachers and neighbors if she got in a bind. The grass we laid last week is alive and well and they are doing what they can to keep it that way.

Chet arrived home Friday after a five-day business trip to Florida. Becky is enjoying teaching at Idaho Falls High School and they are both anxious for their move the end of this month. We continue to relish the chance to have them close. They took care of SaraKay for us while we went to a company party in Idaho Falls Saturday evening. They have been a support and strength to Tim as he has struggled through the last few weeks of treatment.

John and Laurel are heavily involved in school and scouting and enjoying both. We are looking ahead with anticipation at the chance to attend Laurel's senior dance recital (November 21) and then attend Tiffany's wedding (November 22) in Salt Lake with the Richards' extended family.

Tim is seeing some progress with his acne treatment although it is still slow. He had a post-operative exam last week and asked permission to start running so that he could build his stamina but the doctor said, "NO!" Walk....don't run!" He has had a pretty rough junior year so far and he's not through yet, but he has shown a lot of maturity as he's made the best of it. He got asked to the Buddy Dance and has some mixed emotions about his date but some of his friends didn't get their dream date either so it has made it a little easier to accept.

SaraKay was honored last week at the Recognition Assembly at the school for her achievements in reading and writing. Each month they select two or three students per class and they give them a certificate and prize and honor them in an assembly. Before the year is over, each child will have a chance to be honored. It is such a great idea for building self-esteem!

Daddy completed his Trails newsletter last Wednesday and breathed a sigh of relief. One more mailing and he turns the responsibility to someone else. He is already in the thick of his Wood Badge preparations and last week he received word that they are shortening the course to a six-day instead of eight-day experience and also working to shorten the preparation time for the staff.

It will be held the third week in August instead of June so we are wondering again about the possibility of having some sort of family reunion in June. I mentioned it to Shauntel and Randy and they said that until Randy finds out where they are going, they really won't know what June will bring. John and Laurel are also up in the air regarding their summer plans.

I'm gearing up for YW again. I'm looking forward to my annual state school board convention in Sun Valley. I had been really excited to have Daddy attend this year since I went alone last year; but, as luck would have it, Daddy's Wood Badge Course Director's Conference is being held the exact same days as my school board convention and so we will both attend alone. Isn't it amazing that out of an entire year, the one conference I have is the exact same day as Dads!

Both sets of Grandparents are doing well. We received a short note from Grandpa Larsen telling about a phone call he took at the mission home from the area president, President Mickelsen. Grandpa has known President Mickelsen for many years through his church service and the two of them visited freely.

When President Mickelsen visited with the mission president later that day he commented that he was surely fortunate to have President Larsen in his mission. He proceeded to tell the mission president about

Grandpa's distinguished church and community service. Grandpa hadn't ever mentioned to the mission president that he had been a stake president and regional representative and this came as quite a surprise. He commented that the mission president has since treated him with greater respect.

My parents seem to be adjusting to Salt Lake and feeling more at home. The medication that Grandpa Richards is on causes him to hallucinate and they have had some interesting experiences dealing with that. I've been grateful that they both can laugh about it. I'm also grateful for Kathy and Dick and their close proximity to the folks and the support they are to them. Last week Trish and Emily and Bonnie and Christine were able to visit them and the week before Tara and Sean drove up from Provo for a visit. It's amazing how many people they have had come and visit since moving there last April. "All roads lead to Salt Lake".

[Dad] Last week I had a quarterly review with Kim, my boss, and most things look really good, and I am grateful I have almost three months to improve the record on some of the others. He is very complimentary and I appreciate the autonomy he gives me in pursuing my work. The company party that Sue mentioned, was at Kim's home in Idaho Falls. It was for all the professional staff and their spouses. It was good to be able to meet in that kind of environment. I sure feel good about the caliber of people we have working for the council and the support their mates are to them--mine especially! Kim did most of the cooking for the meal; he is quite a cook. His wife, Lin, is transportation director for the Idaho Falls school district and really took to Sue and showed her through their home.

Last Wednesday as we put the Trails mailing together I was grateful for the members of RSVP--retired senior citizens who help with volunteer projects. We were able to put together a mailing of nearly 6,000 pieces, complete with labels and sorting in about three hours. We were through just in time to enjoy some lasagna that Becky brought over during her lunch break.

A tragic death in the community this week was Kent VanOrden, son of Donna & Wayne VanOrden from Thomas. He and a worker were flying back from a job in Washington and crashed into a mountain north of Twin Falls last Friday. They were only accessible by snow machine, but they were able to get them out and the funerals will be on Thursday. His worker was Don Clark's grandson, David Don Clark. Kent was 42 and leaves his wife Ann Miller (daughter of Neil Miller of Miller's honey) with 5 children, the oldest of which is a

sophomore in high school. These kinds of accidents sure make me want to make sure that all of you have sufficient insurance to take care of your families if anything should happen to you.

So that I don't quit on that morbid note, let me just say how fun it is to review with Mom her conversations with each of you this past weekend and how thrilled we are with all that you are doing. In Sunday School class, the kids were quite concerned about the power of Satan and how he could come into their lives. It was fun to share with them a testimony of his reality and some experiences I have had that back that up and then to let them know that he would not be a real threat to them unless they invited him into their lives.

October 20, 1997

[Mom] Many of you have asked regarding Tim. This morning when he left for school he looked better than he has looked for nearly three months. His skin is starting to clear, the boils on his jaw line and neck are going away, and the discoloration is subsiding. We are encouraged and praying that the worst is over. Regarding his challenging class load: he was encouraged last week when he got his Pre-cal test back and got fourth highest in the class. He has really worked to master the concepts and even started playing Handel's Water Music during his calculus study sessions.

Michael Ballam, noted tenor and teacher in the music department at Utah State, has lectured extensively on the effect of music on brain processes and stated that music from the Baroque Period is especially effective in helping people develop thinking skills that have to do with structure, order, and spacial relationships. It has been wonderful to have Tim adding this classical fare to his listening repertoire.

The other night Daddy and I got home late from a meeting and Tim and a friend were sitting at the dining room table working on math with a classical CD playing. I couldn't let the opportunity pass without chiding them a little: "Boy! We leave you two alone for a few hours and look what you do!

SaraKay has a recital tonight and is dressing up like a witch. This Halloween recital is always a fun one for the younger kids. Hopefully she won't be the only one in costume. She received a letter last week from the Bennion children. When Daddy handed her the envelope, she exclaimed, "This is the happiest day of my life!"

Later when I suggested she start writing her return letters and get them into the mail, she stated, "Just because they write doesn't mean I have to!" I can't figure out whether she is lazy or intimidated by Katie's writing style.

It was gratifying Saturday night to attend a Chamber's fund-raising event and see how well Tim is doing. It's an especially talented bunch of students and a lot of them performed solos and with group ensembles. A men's quartet sang, "For the Longest Time". It brought back so many memories of other performances and other quartets. When the final choir number, "The Lord Bless You and Keep You" was performed, I couldn't help thinking of Paul's missionary farewell and the joy of having so much family here. Isn't it amazing how music can bring back the emotions and sweetness of days gone by?

Tim does a good job in the bass section. He told me last week that he is going to ask Mr. Grayson if he would help him select a solo so that he could perform one at the Christmas concert in December. I'm glad he is enjoying his music. I haven't asked him lately, but I suspect he has changed his mind about burning the pianos!

We have been enjoying beautiful fall weather and taking care of as many

preparations for winter as we could while the good weather lasted. There were several things needing to be done at Grandpa and Grandma's and so we headed over there Saturday morning. We picked apples from three trees in the back yard; SaraKay and I worked as a team on the red delicious while Daddy picked the yellow. The morning was warm and the smell of fall was in the air. A lot of the leaves were on the ground and I was reminded of times past when we would bundle up and help Grandma Larsen rake them into piles. The apples were beautiful with only a few spoiled by birds and worms. It was a crisp enough morning that the bees weren't out yet and several of the pecked-out holes in the sides of the apples had hornets in them, too cold to move.

It was fun to share this experience with Daddy and SaraKay and to reflect back on the many, many harvest experiences I have shared with my own father while I was growing up and with each of you children as you helped Daddy, Grandpa Larsen and Uncle Gary gather in the fruits of their summer's labors.

SaraKay played in the leaves while we checked things inside the house. As we walked through the house I noticed that everything was just as they left it: all the clocks stopped at 1:00 and the calendar on the wall was still turned to April, as if time has stood still since their departure. What a sacrifice it is for couple to leave home and family and all their conveniences to venture out and offer their all to the Lord. We certainly are proud of them!

We returned home just in time to catch the start of the BYU-Hawaii game. SaraKay and I, using a little gismo we found in one of the boxes we got at the July Larsen auction, peeled and cored apples and made two beautiful apple pies as well as filled the trays of our food dehydrator with apple slices for drying. The smell of the pies and the apples drying filled the house and even lingered around through most of Sunday. How fun it would be to share some of this bounty with each of you if you only lived closer. Our project finished up just about the time BYU polished off Hawaii!

Daddy spent part of the game time puttering around the house, fixing things. How I love to have him here puttering! Following the game we spent some time in the storage room sorting, discarding, and arranging. It is a wonderful thing to be at a time in our life when there is time to do some of those special projects we've needed to do for the last 30 years.

Yesterday I called to check on how Grandma Ilene was feeling since she was a little under the weather last week. She was gone for a while and so I had a long talk with my dad. It reminded me of some of the great talks we used to have as we worked together in the beets and would ride to and from the beet plots through the Snake River Valley.

He talked about some of the challenges of getting older; the confinement, having to give up the independence of driving, accepting the physical limitations that come, and in the midst of it all trying to stay sweet and pleasant and willing to submit to each day's challenges.

I talked to him some about the sugar beet industry that has been revived here in southeast Idaho and he said that he has spent so much of his life in that industry that even now he will have vivid dreams of trying to solve some of the problems he grappled with when he worked for Utah and Idaho Sugar.

Another recurring dream he has is that he is back in Washington and that he gets up and goes to see Nathan and tries to help him with the heavy problems he is facing with his business. When Grandpa awakens he realizes that he is in Salt Lake, far away from Nate, and quite unable to do very much to ease Nate's burdens.

It made me wonder if we ever stop wanting to be there for our children. If the answer is indeed, no, then surely the heavens weep with us in our trials and rejoice with us in our joys and goodness, and even come to our rescue in those moments that our strength fails and our "hands hang down."

I remember when Grandpa and Grandma Richards were in Pakistan and we were going through so many changes with selling the farm and our home, relocating, changing jobs, and trying to keep up with nine young children as well as pregnant with Tim. Nate was doing our cabinets for our new home and the winter was so severe that he didn't know if he could get through to deliver them when he did finish. He had been struggling with his health and couldn't work for more than a few hours without becoming exhausted. He knew we needed to finish our home and so he brought the cabinets partially finished and we set up shop in the garage with a space heater to keep him and the lacquer warm while he completed them.

Part way through that ordeal I came over one day and found him lying on the floor deathly sick. We took him into the doctor and Dr. Haddock wanted to admit him to the hospital with pneumonia. Nate refused but promised to get some bedrest. When he didn't improve, we loaded his truck up with his tools, and he and Chad headed home. It left us with the cabinet job partly done and so we contracted with our contractor to complete the job. It was a trying time for all of us and as we would write to Pakistan and tell of some of our concerns, Grandma and Grandpa felt a helplessness to reach out and assist. Later Grandma told me that when she would get our letters and feel so frustrated and worried, that she and Grandpa would get on their knees and plead with the Lord to bless us with the strength to handle the situations and the courage to go on. I guess that has stuck with me and sometimes when we know you kids are facing some pretty tough times, I remind myself that I can pray for you and know that the Lord will help you in your hour of need

[Dad] I'm glad that your mother is such a good writer. As I read her account of last Saturday, it was so vivid that it made my mouth water for some of those delicious apples. I'm glad we have this ongoing history of the life and times of the Larsen clan.

Other than what your mother has already written, I don't have much to report. Other than a lot of detail work, phone calls, meetings, and trying to get some things to happen toward my endowment goals for the year there hasn't been much going on in my life.

Of interest however, is the fact that we have obtained approval from BSA to go to a six- day format for Wood Badge to be in compliance with the new "green" Scouting manual from the Church which discourages participation in training courses that involve Sunday camping. I have felt in the past that there was enough spare time in the schedule that it could be shortened. As I have worked over the schedule, trimming it from eight days to six, those feelings have been vindicated.

I believe that the schedule will be much more efficient with a compressed timetable. So that means that my WB course will run from Monday, August 10, through Saturday, August 15. Any of you in Scouting positions would certainly be welcome to come to that premier training course!

Sunday night was a Trek reunion and fireside with the whole family invited. It was fun to have the stake center filled, almost like stake conference, and to have the opportunity of viewing a video of the trek and hear some testimonies from those involved.

As Sue and I visited afterward we observed that we have so many rich spiritual experiences with our family that the trek wasn't such a "mountaintop" experience as it was for so many others. It was a great experience, but it seemed to me that most of the adults made much more of the experience than the youth did. I'm sure the maturity level heightened their identification with the pioneers and their ability to read much more meaning into many of the incidents and experiences of the trek.

It is much more significant to me to imagine moving a group like that across the plains after moving a smaller group across country for the jamboree--with all our meals taken care of, knowing exactly where we were supposed to be and when, having motorized transport to take us where we went, being able to sleep in good beds, with hot and cold running water.

October 27, 1997

[Mom] I just got off the phone with Steve. He and Bonnie are in Idaho Falls where Bonnie and kids will spend the week while Steve returns to Chicago to continue with the job he is doing for Assist. Next Monday they will all fly to Chicago and spend the next two months there while Steve completes this assignment. If all goes well, they will be home for Christmas. What an adventure!

Steve said they will be living in the Residence Inn, which is an extended stay facility that has apartments with complete living quarters as well as laundry facilities in the complex. The client will pay for their expenses including a rental car and so rather than continue living apart like they have the last three weeks, they are going to try this arrangement. He mentioned that they have picked up several more clients in the Chicago area and that if this works, he may be asked to do several of these assignments in the months ahead. Their family situation is such that they can be pretty mobile right now and the training he is receiving is invaluable.

Becky and Chet will be moving this week and so yesterday they attended their new ward and began to get acquainted. The schedule of their new ward is such that they have their afternoon free so they came for dinner.

Last night before we got into the home evening lesson, I asked Tim and SaraKay if it was hard being in such a small family. They both agreed that it had been more fun when there were more siblings living at home. One advantage of having Becky and Chet close is that they have become such good friends with Tim; they are so good to listen to him when he gets discouraged or needs some advice.

For example: A couple weeks ago we went to the temple with them and we arrived home to a quiet house because Tim was in Idaho Falls with his friends on a hot date and Sara Kay was in bed. It was nice for Daddy and I to have a quiet evening. Little did we realize that Becky and Chet were not having a quiet evening. Tim and his three buddies and their dates had finished their activity earlier than expected and they decided to drop in on the Seely's for a late-night party. As Tim related the incident to me later, I couldn't help but appreciate the patience and hospitality that was shown the unexpected guests. Tim said it was after ten and he went up to the front door and knocked. (No response) He knocked again. (No response) After what seemed like a long wait, the door opened slightly and one very tired and disheveled Chet peered out into the night and into the face of his youngest brother-in-law.

"What did he say," I inquired, as Tim related the incident. "Well, at first I think he didn't realize who it was, but as soon as he saw it was me, he said, "Timmy!" He invited us all

in and we played Balderdash and visited and had a great time!

Friday night Snake River played their final game of the season and won, breaking the state record of the most consecutive wins by any school football team. The National Guard was present and prepared with a 32-gun salute following the victory. The weather was terrible and the team played in snow and slush but the euphoria of the occasion dispelled any gloom.

Next Friday we play our first game in the playoffs in Holt Arena. Prospects look good for us to win another state championship. It's sure fun to have a winning team. It's such a source of community pride.

Saturday was spent making apple cider with all the apples we have accumulated. We washed and cut them and loaded them in garbage bags and then went to Lee Buttars' home to use his press. We didn't get as tasty a product as we did the time before because our three trees and Grandpa's were all delicious and the juice is better if it is of mixed variety, but it is still a wonderful treat for the months ahead. We delivered some apples to Alva Lu's daughter, Trina, and offered them to others in the family and still had plenty to juice. By the time we finished it was nearly six that evening and we were grateful for the extra hour of sleep we were getting that night.

Tim enjoyed his date to the Buddy Dance despite the fact that both he and his date were limited by their recent surgeries. Amy had knee surgery a few days before the date and thought she might have to be in a wheelchair. They left here at 4, drove to Idaho Falls to play laser tag, have dinner, and then drove back here for the dance and pictures, and then drove back to Rexburg for a spook alley. Whatever happened to the good ol' days when a school dance was a school dance and dinner instead of all these additional activities and rigmarole?

I just got off the phone with Shauntel. She was spending a quiet and cold day at home. Following their meetings on Sunday, a terrible snow storm moved in (the same one that dropped 51 inches on Colorado and Nebraska) and everything shut down. They were without power and so went to some friends' house to cook dinner and visit until it subsided.

Although they were without power for 24 hours, they managed to keep warm and survive. The snowfall was so heavy that branches were breaking off of trees and things came to a standstill. They have certainly had their share of extreme weather this year in Iowa! Shauntel was happy to hear that they might be able to spend Thanksgiving with family (Steve and Bonnie) and still thinking they may see family during the Christmas holiday, too. (Dave and Andrea)

[Dad] Becky and Chet went for a "walk through" of their new home yesterday. The people they are buying from had just gotten approval on their loan, so they are anxious to move out and all the closings are taking place on Wednesday. I will be able to help them move their furniture and big stuff that night and then Sue is helping them the next day.

The program for this Tuesday night for the Laurels fell through and so they have asked me to come and teach them how to make hemp necklaces. That should be fun and I am looking forward to it. I have a presentation this coming Saturday at the University of Scouting on New Scout Patrol.

We were so excited with the BYU football team finally hitting a rhythm on Saturday and scoring some points. Watching or listening to them play is such a part of our fall routine.

Hardly a day goes by that someone doesn't ask about one of our missionaries--Mike, Paul, or Dad and Alva Lu. I'm always

pleased to have a good report for those who ask.

(The following letter was received from Shauntel, addressed to Tim. It was so filled with tender feelings that I have chosen to include it as a part of this record.)

Tim,

Things have been very weird around here lately. We had a big storm on Sunday that left six inches of snow. It was really wet, heavy snow and it stuck to the leaves on the trees (we haven't even had enough of a Fall yet for the leaves to be off the trees) that it broke many tree branches and took down power lines. Driving around our neighborhood there's hardly a home without some broken branches in the yard. With the power lines being down we did not have electricity for about 24 hours. We ate dinner at our friend's house and considered sleeping on their living room floor, too, because we had no heat, but we roughed it and about noon the following day our power came back on.

Randy has had one interview already for his residency. He interviewed at Southern Illinois University in Springfield. He also has interview invitations to Iowa, Indiana, Wisconsin, Nebraska, and Missouri. We're hoping to hear from some Western states within the next weeks. We're kind of tired of being away from home.

How are things going for you? My heart aches whenever I think of what you've been going through this year. If being there would help you, I would drop everything and fly out there, you know. (I'm sure that's just about the last thing you'd want—some big sister following you around all day, right?) Really, though, you are very important to me and I will come if you ask me to.

I remember about two years ago when the family told Randy and I that they were going to fast for us, I instantly pictured your face and what it would mean to me to have you fast for me. When I thought that, I was immediately strengthened and I know with your faith and prayers we were sure to overcome our trial.

Thoughout our medical procedures I kept thinking, "Tim is praying for us" and every time I thought that, I felt peace. Randy and I are going to fast for you like you did for us, so that you might have strength to get through your tough days.

You know, even though Randy and I still don't have kids, we feel as though our prayers have been answered. We have been able to find peace and enjoyment again in life despite not getting what we wanted. We don't feel anymore like we're missing something or like our lives are pointless—instead we have been able to feel Heavenly Father's love for us stronger than we have ever felt it.

You know several weeks ago when we found out that the baby we were going to adopt was staying with his mother? It was a terrible disappointment to us and yet that week I felt closer to the Lord than at any other time in my life. We had faced our worst fears and realized that we could handle them with the Lord's help. What are your biggest fears?

Here is a quote Randy's mom sent us a while ago. Orson F. Whitney said this*: "No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude, and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God…and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we came here to*

acquire and which will make us more like our Father and Mother in Heaven."

When you come through this, Tim, and you will come through it because you are a strong person, you will see how you have changed and you will be grateful for the opportunity to change. The day before I was going to find out if the medical procedures had helped me become pregnant, I was trying to prepare myself mentally for the worst. At one point I thought to myself that if the pregnancy test was negative, when I saw Christ again my first question would be "Why couldn't you just give me a child? It is such a small thing to ask and I have tried to always do what you asked." At that moment in my mind I saw myself asking that question of Christ and then he turned and showed me what I was before and what I had become because of this experience and I was filled with a feeling of gratitude and understanding. I bear testimony to you that someday you will understand why and feel gratitude for the person you have become through these experiences.

I love you very much and think about you every day. I hope you will feel the prayers and mental encouragement stretching out to you from Iowa, Texas, California, Utah, Mexico, and Heaven. You are loved! Shauntel

November 3, 1997

[Mom] Tim left early this morning for basketball practice and I've had him on my mind all day. Although he doesn't have final clearance from Dr. Riley until the 13th, the six-week mark since his surgery is tomorrow and he is trying to ease back into some physical activity. Saturday he went over to the church to shoot some hoops and when he got home he said his biggest problem was that his joints ached when he ran. The Accutane that he is taking for his skin has so many bad side effects, one being aching joints. He found out that tryouts have been moved up a week and he just doesn't dare miss these early morning practices anymore.

Complicating his life even more has been his dependence on his math teacher, Mr. Grant. Tim spends his lunch hour and 45 minutes before school every day in the math room, trying to understand the concepts in his Precalculus class. It has really been a challenge for him this tri, but he is tenacious and continues to work at it until it comes. Now that basketball class conflicts with his math tutoring, he is wondering just how it is all going to work out. I'm anxious for him to get home and fill me in on just how things went.

SaraKay had an emotionally charged week with all the preparations for Halloween. It seems like Halloween is getting bigger and bigger every year with people decorating their homes earlier, hosting activities, and sponsoring costume parades and such. A lot of the hype originates in the school with music, art, and writing classes being dedicated to ghosts and goblins but part of the pressure comes from the community, too.

By the time we finished up on Halloween night, I was relieved to see it over. I read an article in a national school board magazine that said that in some districts law suits are being brought against the district for celebrating Halloween and not permitting Christmas to be celebrated. Both holidays have religious origins and the conservative right say that it's not fair to ban one and not the other. Good point.

I had an enjoyable week which included having Bonnie and family spend some time with us and also helping Becky and Chet move into their new home. Although I'm not sure what time their flight is, Steve and Bonnie are enroute to Chicago today. It is only a three-hour flight from Salt Lake to Chicago so they hope the children won't get too restless.

The flight hasn't concerned me as much as the trip from the baggage carousel to the car. Bonnie said they are taking three car seats, a stroller, a swing, and the usual paraphernalia needed for a family of five. I'm sure they're going to get their share of stares, but hopefully some offers of help, too, if that is what they need. I remember Stephani flying with her three when they moved from Indiana to Morgan Hill. Lindsay was driving the truck and so he wasn't with her. If I remember it right, a sweet woman on the flight offered to help and really saved the day for her; a true angel of mercy.

Becky and Chet have a lovely home and are being made to feel a part of things already in their new ward; Chet was called yesterday to be the new scoutmaster. It almost seemed like the ward leadership was lying in wait for him to arrive!

I've been grateful that so many of you kids have gotten into homes this year. Although it stretches you financially, it has a way of helping you live economically and it's usually a good investment for the future. When I talked to David and Andrea on Saturday, they were in the middle of installing tile on their kitchen counter tops! They must be quite the handymen.

Randy had the first of several interviews for a residency program last week. The interviewer commented at the conclusion of the interview that he had read a lot of personal statements of applicants in his job, but he had read very few that were as impressive as Randy's was! That was very encouraging.

In the next two months he will interview with schools all across the nation. The interviews last for most of a day and he is trying to schedule them so that he gets several in when he visits the different areas. He is going to be driving to most of them in the Midwest but will have to fly to the ones out west and on the east coast. It's a pretty exciting time for them right now and we're hoping that some good offers come through a little closer to home. Keep us posted!

I leave Wednesday for the State School Board convention in Sun Valley. I'm dreading going. I like the speakers and the seminars, but I don't like being by myself. I wish there was another woman on the board with me that I could hang around with. I'll probably be alright once I get there.

Daddy is going to Salt Lake on Thursday and will be back Saturday evening from his Wood Badge conference so Tim and SaraKay are going to be taking care of each other.

SaraKay just arrived home and informed me that tomorrow is "potato day" and she has to dress up a potato for her assignment in one class. I guess we need to get out the fabric box and yarn and get started on that project. I suggested that we use one of the over-sized potatoes that we get from Uncle Gary instead of the small, uniform sized #1 she brought home from school. That way we wouldn't have to make a costume, we could just drape the big spud in one of our costumes from our "dress-up" collection, but she wouldn't hear of it. I think some teachers stay up nights thinking of ways to make us mothers miserable.

[Dad] I have been helping Tim with application of some medication on his back lately. It is incredible how much his acne problem has improved this past couple of weeks. Maybe there is hope that this stuff will do its thing and he will be able to get over this. I know he appreciates those of you who have called or written encouragement. He has been pretty stoic in handling this problem.

Last week I was able to complete several projects for Wood Badge in preparation for next year's course and also to prepare for

the University of Scouting which was held last Saturday. I had a couple of displays in the midway for the Endowment and Wood Badge and also I had to teach a couple classes about the New Scout Patrol--the 11 year old Scouts.

I enjoy doing these presentations and getting the participants involved in the discussions. The biggest drawback was having to use up almost my whole Saturday. Also, I was on my feet almost all day and doing quite a bit of walking. By the time I came home, I was really crippled up and could hardly walk.

I am so grateful for the gospel answers we have for the truly meaningful questions of life--Why are we here? Where did we come from? Where are we going when we die? This knowledge and understanding colors everything we do and gives us the motivation to be good and kind and thoughtful and honest. I read an article in the Sunday paper about Marine basic training and the influence it has on individuals from all walks of life--but primarily, those from lesser privileged homes. The teaching of some basic values, the feeling of team and brotherhood, the striving for excellence in everything you do, these teachings incorporated into a person's being over the few short weeks of basic training change them forever.

We are so blessed to start from a solid base of understanding and life habits and an eternal perspective that lifts us to such high levels to start from. How great is our responsibility to help lift those who are not so blessed. "I'll lift thee and thee lift me and we'll ascend together!"

We had a great stake conference this weekend. For the last couple of years the stake presidency has been following a theme around being a millennial stake, ward, family, and individual. The theme this conference was millennial people love unconditionally. The talks were focused on the mighty change of heart that comes from being loved unconditionally. What a beautiful spirit pervaded the meetings and music.

My conference last weekend was a very effective and inspirational one. There were aspects of my role as Wood Badge Course Director that I hadn't really thought much about and this helped to focus my thinking. I was grateful for the positive approach taken to addressing the desires of the LDS Church as reflected in the new "Scouting" manual. Paul Anderson, the area WB coordinator was surprised at how quickly he was given the go-ahead on his request from national to approve a six-day format. He said, the fellow from national said that he had had countless calls from all over the country from various churches sponsoring Scouting expressing concern that they didn't always see their Scouters in church on Sunday. He said this would be an opportunity to address their concerns in a positive way.

Hart Bullock, LDS Relations officer of BSA, was there and told about his meetings with Pres. Monson and Elder Goasland and their feelings for Scouting and Wood Badge and the good that it does. I hope that through my role I can help to train another group of Scouting leaders and raise the quality of Scouting delivered to boys.

November 10, 1997

[Mom] I got a call this morning from my sister, Lisa. She and Don moved to the Phoenix area about five months ago and they are in the process of selling their home in Washington and trying to find one somewhere close to Don's work. Moves are never easy and she wanted to visit about some of the struggles they are having trying to feel at home in a new area and ward. She mentioned that she is homesick for the change of seasons she has been accustomed to in Washington and that she

never realized how much of an adjustment the perpetual sunshine would be for her.

Daddy and I both arrived home from our conventions enlightened and tired! It is puzzling how just sitting in meetings can be so wearing, but it was and I was grateful to get home and into my routine again.

It's interesting to rub shoulders with board members from all over the state and share ideas about education. Although Elzo (the superintendent) and I were the only ones attending from our district without our spouses, the other board members made us feel comfortable and we joined in the festivities even though it wasn't nearly as fun as it would have been with Daddy along.

I thoroughly enjoyed the speakers and seminars and came away with some good ideas for our district. During the business session, resolutions were debated and voted on. Those that pass go to the '98 Legislature for consideration. It has been interesting to be on this end of the process because for so many years I was seeing it from Grandpa Larsen's vantage point as a legislator.

Even as a member of the school board I couldn't help thinking that most of the resolutions were asking for funding and I could see why Grandpa sometimes felt that no matter how much was appropriated for education, it was never enough (according to the educators.) It is disheartening to see the increased demands and expectations that are being put on the schools because of the failure of the homes to provide stable and nurturing environments. It seems like we are constantly bombarded with new programs that are supposed to solve problems that would be largely prevented by strong homes.

Saturday night Snake River beat Preston in the play-offs. Tim went with some friends to the game and Daddy and I opted to attend stake conference. It is unfortunate that the last four years our stake conference falls on the play-off nights. It always cuts into our conference attendance.

Sunday our ward provided the music for conference and Daddy and Tim and I all sang in the choir. It was a wonderful experience. I was grateful to be in the choir and not directing it. I never have gotten over my fear and feelings of inadequacy regarding leading choirs.

Just a week from today we will send Paul off to El Salvador. We received a very sweet letter from his MTC companion expressing his love and appreciation for all Paul had done for him. I know Paul is anxious to get into the mission field, but I also know that there is a tough adjustment those first few months to companions, the food, and culture, and I am always relieved when that part is over.

November 17, 1997

[Dad] Today was a wonderful day as we were able to meet Paul in the SLC Airport and spend a couple hours with him before he left for El Salvador. We spent last night in Layton with Karen & Jim. They have such a lovely home and sweet family.

In addition, John and Laurel joined us. He brought someone from work to the airport at the same time, so he was able to come in a company car and not have additional expense.

When he arrived, John told how he had received a phone call the night before from some foreigner who he could hardly understand who left a number where he could be reached today and for Paul to call. Mike had gotten permission from the mission president to talk to Paul so we were able to place the call and get them together before Paul left. Paul looked good and was so pumped and ready to head for his field of service. He said the MTC wasn't nearly as hard as he expected it to be.

Tomorrow, I have Perry Cochell from the Western Region office here to work with me and it is always a strain to keep enough appointments to fill his day.

We were disappointed on Saturday as both of our teams lost. Snake River lost to Marsh Valley by a field goal in the last few seconds of the game. It was a great game, but SR had opportunities to win the game but didn't put it together. Marsh Valley played flawless ball, they really wanted to get back at us for beating them for their homecoming game this year and also, their coach is retiring at the end of this year and his son was the quarterback. So, I guess, Marsh Valley wanted it more than we did.

Then to have BYU do so poorly and lose their game too, Tim said this hasn't been a very good football day for our teams.

I appreciated all of you kids remembering to touch base with your mother on her birthday. She had a good day and will probably write about it so I won't say anymore, except "Thanks" for remembering.

November 24, 1997

[Mom] Friday we left about two and headed to Provo to attend Laurel's dance recital. Since returning from her mission, she has been a member of a modern dance club on campus. This was their year-end concert and the dance numbers were all choreographed by the members of this group. John had arranged for us to get tickets and Laurel's mother, two sisters, former mission companions and roommates, as well as Aunt Karen and her daughter Teresa were all there to show support.

I felt like I had stepped into a different world from the minute the first number began. Sara Kay was enthralled with the entertaining music and the wide variety of interpretations that the students had given to each song. Modern dancing is done bare foot and there is a tremendous amount of movement and leaps and turns. I was amazed at the creativity and athleticism of the dancers as well as delighted with the grace with which the dances were performed. I was especially grateful to be able to be there since I've never seen Laurel dance and I know it is such an important part of her life. It was obvious that she is very talented and thoroughly enjoys it.

We also appreciated John and Laurel's hospitality to us in putting us up for the night even though her mother and sister and family were also staying with them for a few days. We were treated to banana splits following the performance.

The next morning we attended Tiffany's wedding in the Salt Lake Temple. Although both the bride and groom are from Moscow, they had an enormous group of family and friends join them for the ceremony and dinner afterwards.

John and Laurel attended the wedding but returned to Provo for some commitments there at 11:00. Following the ceremony, we had some time to visit with Dick and Kathy and Lisa and Don and Grandpa and Grandma Richards. Charles and Brenda were so busy most of the time taking care of details that we didn't get in too much time with them but we did see the cousins and catch up on family news.

In Charles' remarks during the wedding dinner he told about the word "synergism". He said that in chemistry that term means that when you combine two chemicals, the result is a new substance that is superior to the sum of the individual parts. He compared this to marriage and the way that two fine people can be united as one and their potential for accomplishing good is magnified many times beyond what it would be if they remained single. I thought that was a sweet analogy.

He also mentioned the wonderful legacy of faithfulness that had been passed to Tiffany and Matt through the families that were represented in that room that day and how grateful he was for the loving families that he was a part of. It was nice to be able to share the experience with most of my family.

We returned home about five and soon thereafter Becky and Chet arrived. Since Becky has been coaching basketball after school, we hardly get to see them anymore, and it was fun to have them drop in and spend part of the evening with us. Although her team hasn't been winning very many games, Becky is enjoying working with them and using her basketball skills again.

She gets really tired by the time she gets home each night at six and has appreciated Chet's willingness to share in the housekeeping and cooking duties.

When I talked with Steve the other day, he said that he needed to request a retraction of information given out in last week's letter. Apparently Jonie and Jeff had arranged to go to dinner with them and they had even lined up a sitter for the event, but at the last minute Jonie's boss needed her to work and so she didn't get to go to the convention with Jeff. No dinner....no night out...no visit!

Aside from that, life in Illinois is having its ups and downs and the jury is still out on whether this kind of living is do-able for their young family. Hopefully Shauntel and Randy will be able to join them for Thanksgiving and it will provide both families with a touch of home.

The low spot of last week was on Wednesday when Tim found out that he had been cut from the basketball team. Ever since he had his surgery and has been on the Accutane, we have known that his chances of making the team would be diminished considerably, but we also felt like if he didn't at least try, he would always wonder if he should have.

Tim received clearance to play sports on the 13th and try-outs started on the 17th and lasted for two days. On Wednesday I was touring the schools with the school board and we were at the high school during the lunch hour. I knew that the team member's names were supposed to be posted that day and so when I saw Tim in the halls with some friends I hoped he would know and the suspense would be over. The minute I looked into his eyes, I knew he hadn't made it. It wasn't a good time to talk about it then and so I waited until he returned home from school to question him about what had happened.

Apparently the coach called him into his office and asked him if he would consider playing on the JV team for another year. He told him that he would get good playing time. Tim asked him if he would be on Varsity then his senior year and the coach said he couldn't make that kind of a promise. Two other junior boys would play on the JV team but they would also suit up with the varsity.

There was a similar situation on Tim's JV team last year and the sole junior was a bit of a misfit, so Tim had already determined before Wednesday arrived that if that was the situation, he would not accept it. He told the coach no and got up to leave. The coach asked him if he wouldn't reconsider. I know Coach Combs was aware of the health problems Tim has had the last three months and was trying to do what he could to work with him.

Tim responded that after the two days of try-outs, every muscle and joint in his body was aching and he really didn't know if he could perform on the court when he was in such pain.

When Tim recounted this all to me, my first impression was that he had made a mistake and should have agreed to play JV

with the hope that he would be able to regain his skills and play varsity his senior year, but I knew that it was too late to reconsider and that decisions had been made based on his refusal.

When Tim saw my disappointment, he commented that I didn't realize just how hard it had been for him. I didn't understand what he meant and he said that during the two days of try-outs he had been in so much pain that he could hardly move. He knew Dr. Chester had said he had to be on the medication for two more months and that he wouldn't get any relief from the joint pain until he was through with the treatment. He just didn't feel like it was worth it. After his explanation, I felt badly that I had responded the way I had. I guess I have enjoyed watching him play ball over the years and it was hard for me to see it come to an end.

I would like to comment on these past few months and the experiences we have shared with Tim. Through all the tough times and discouraging days, Tim has stayed true to what he knew he should be doing. He has had an extremely difficult class load this tri and he has put in hours every night trying to keep his grades up and understand the material. He has continued with his church duties and never missed a Sunday nor a priesthood assignment.

One rather humorous and yet telling experience came the Monday evening before Paul left on his mission. Paul's home teaching companion had been difficult to catch up to and Paul wanted to visit his families before leaving the following Wednesday. Tim volunteered to be his companion and the two of them started preparing for the visit. I knew that one of their families was the Harpers who have six lively boys, none of which are famous for being very kind nor tactful. I worried about Tim because he had been on the Accutane long enough that his face and neck were badly blemished and dry flaky skin was around his mouth and up onto his cheeks. I had a feeling that the Harper boys might say something that would hurt his feelings and I mentioned this to him. He knew them well enough that he agreed he probably would get some comments but he wanted to be with Paul on one last priesthood assignment and he took the chance. As they left, I had the feeling that Tim was like Daniel going into the lion's den.

Later, upon returning home, he described the visit. He said that when the boys came to answer the door, sure enough, they took one look at him and started asking what was wrong with his face. He quickly explained that he was on some medication and that it was helping him get better. By the time the parents came and joined in, they were seated and ready to start the lesson. He breathed a sigh of relief and the lesson began.

Before he knew it, the youngest little boy, Lane, came over and climbed up on his lap and started touching his face and asking him more questions. After what seemed like an awfully long visit, they both were grateful to return home. We all had a good laugh about it as he related it to us, but I know it was a tough situation for him and one that he could have easily avoided but chose not to.

Tim has done his part to work with me when we didn't see eye-to-eye on some things and he has never been disrespectful of me despite the pressures he has been under. One morning he was trying to finish up getting ready and get to school for an early session with Mr. Grant. He and I both went out to the Toyota and started to scrape the frost off the windshield so he could be on his way. I was doing what I could to expedite matters, sensing his frustration. I knew we hadn't

had family prayer yet but I wasn't going to press the issue since he was already running late.

Just as he was ready to get into the pickup, he commented, "We didn't have prayer." We both returned to the house for a quick family prayer with Daddy and Sara Kay and he was on his way to face another day. It was times like that that I knew we were going to make it through this experience and be the stronger for it. I know that Tim has learned a lot about compassion and caring these last few months and that although his situation isn't what he would have wished for, he has accepted it and is moving on. He has appreciated each of you and your concern and prayers in his behalf.

[Dad] Last week was a busy one. My work with Perry Cochell on Tuesday was fruitful and we hope to see some significant gifts to the Scouts from our efforts. It's amazing to me how many people have significant assets and holdings and don't get very good professional advice regarding ways to minimize the taxes and maximize the benefits to their families.

Many professional advisors have very little idea how much flexibility can be built into charitable trusts and how much real benefit can be given to their clients. One of the hardest things to combat is the professional pride--the tendency to think they know it all or have all the answers.

I had several other committee meetings dealing with endowment issues and have a lot of work to do to follow up on those meetings. It is always rewarding to me to see the willingness people have to help worthy causes and to spend time and resources helping the Scouting movement and other worthy efforts to make a difference in our communities. We would be really limited in what we could do without the volunteers!

Last year we started sending out Thanksgiving cards to people and businesses that had done anything for Scouting during the year. This year we are sending out over 900 cards. It took me a full ten hours of signing and writing notes on many of those cards to do my part in recognizing those who had helped during the year. I was amazed at how many of them I knew and had something to say to them that would be meaningful.

Mom mentioned the weekend and what a special time it was for us. I was like SaraKay, sitting on the edge of my chair watching every movement of the dancers Friday night. It was fascinating and several of the numbers were spiritually moving as well. I'm sure we were biased, but felt that the stage lit up when Laurel was present and that she was the most beautiful and talented dancer there. We were so glad to be able to spend some time with her mother, Marilyn, and some of her sisters and family.

Several times a day my thoughts turn to Mike and Paul--our Spanish missionaries, and I wonder how they are doing and what they are doing and how they are getting along. I especially wonder about Paul, just getting to El Salvador, who his first companion will be, how he will get along with the culture, the language, and everything. We are so blessed that each of you have learned to work and make the best of whatever situation you get into to.

December 1,1997

[Mom] Today is early release and we're going to Pocatello to take Tim to the doctor for his check-up. He is looking better every day and life seems to have settled down a bit for him. This weekend is the annual Chamber's Christmas Concert and he has rehearsals every night except Thursday so it will keep him busy getting ready for that. We had a wonderful Thanksgiving and enjoyed having John and Laurel and Grant

here for the weekend. Curtis (Deniece's oldest son) came on Wednesday and stayed until Friday and we were happy to get better acquainted with him. He has received his mission call to Milan, Italy and will enter the MTC on January 21st. He has enjoyed Ricks College and said that Christine is planning on coming next year.

John and Laurel and Grant arrived Wednesday evening about nine. The traffic through the Salt Lake Valley was horrendous and slowed them down a little, but for the most part they didn't have any serious problems with traffic or weather. I was grateful that it waited until today before it started to snow and permitted the kids to drive back to Provo on dry roads.

Thursday Becky and Chet and their friends, Dallen and Karla Johns and Chandler, joined us for the day. We played our traditional game of volleyball in the morning, had dinner, and then relaxed for the balance of the day.

Friday evening Becky and Chet hosted the group at their home. They had gone to a lot of effort to make it a special evening including having a fire in the fireplace and homemade salsa! (Tim wants me to get the recipe).

Before the weekend was over, we watched several videos, the kids got in some studying, and we had some good visits. It was pleasant having Laurel and Grant here with us. They were good to help out and it gave us a chance to get better acquainted. John and Laurel seem very compatible and capable and part of our time visiting was spent talking through John's job possibilities. He is presently looking for an internship for this coming summer and if all goes as planned, he will graduate in the spring of' 99. One company he has been very interested in is John Deere. They are a wonderful company and very "family friendly."

Last night at stake choir practice Kent Clegg asked me about Paul. We haven't received any word from him since putting him on the plane on the 17th. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about him and hope that he is okay and getting through the trauma of the first few weeks. I know it is difficult at best and our prayers have certainly been in his behalf.

I wondered if he and Mike even celebrated Thanksgiving or if it comes and goes unnoticed by the missionaries. I know that usually the families in the branches in the mission try to make Christmas special for the missionaries.

Do you kids remember the year that Elder Anderson dropped by a few days after Christmas and asked if we would like to share some of the goodies that they had received from the local members? We said that we would and he went out to the car and brought in a large Hefty garbage bag full of odd and ends of candies, popcorn, cookies, and every kind of thing imaginable! I was amazed at the outpouring of love that Hefty bag represented although by the time they brought it to us, much of it was beyond recognition and not too delectable. Anyway, I've hoped that our missionaries will have a good holiday and enjoy the opportunity to celebrate it in a different part of the world and with a different people and culture. We will certainly feel their absence but rejoice in the work they are doing.

I am including a letter from Grandpa and Grandma Larsen. How we miss them! The bright side of having them so far away is that Jeanie is able to share her special events with them and feel of their love and support more than ever before. The Arizona Tempe Mission is so fortunate to have them as a part of the missionary force!

[Dad] The Thanksgiving weekend certainly was an enjoyable one for me. For three days I was able to totally put aside cares of

the world and enjoy the time with the family. We watched several movies together as well as going through an incredible amount of delicious food.

SaraKay seems to live for the next holiday insomuch that she was driving Sue crazy until she started working on Christmas decorations yesterday. So last night we put up the tree and decorated it and I spent some time outside putting up lights. "It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas..."

Sunday, as I prepared my Sunday School lesson about D&C 135 and the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph, I asked Sue if she could easily turn to the pictures of Carthage Jail when we were there. It was a poignant memory of our brief time there and also learning about Pres. Benson's death and Mike saying, "In my memory, Carthage will always be the place where two prophets died." It is hard to help others share the same feelings about Carthage without being there. But I hoped my class could feel the depth of my testimony regarding the Prophet and the magnitude of his mission.

I was reading a talk by J. Willard Marriott, Jr. at BYU and wanted to share with you something he said. "Finally, enjoy your work. Make it fun. Don't take yourself too seriously; take your assignment seriously. We often think of our prophet leaders as maybe men who don't have a great sense of humor. We've seen President Hinckley on 60 Minutes, and we saw what a great sense of humor he has. President Kimball had a wonderful sense of humor. I often wondered about Joseph Fielding Smith, and I was a good friend of Arthur Haycock, who was his secretary for many years, so I said to Arthur, 'Tell me about Joseph Fielding Smith's sense of humor.' He thought for a minute and he said, 'You know, President Smith used to say, 'Adam and Eve were named Smith, and the less righteous their children became, the more their name changed.' And then he would say, 'Arthur, Haycock is a long way from Smith.' So be happy in your work. Make it fun for yourself and your associates."

His concluding thought was: "....most successful companies and most successful individuals learn to focus on their core values and competencies, on what they do well, and they seek to continuously improve it.....So, stay true to what you know best, and use all of your efforts to make it better and better."

December 9, 1997

[Dad] Yesterday was a great birthday. At work, we always have a party for any employee having a birthday and they can order whatever they want. I had a pecan pie from Frontier Pies and it was great! I even had some left over to bring home and Tim was salivating a little over it. Last night we had a Larsen Family Home Evening starting at Gary and Linda's for appetizers. Their home is so lovely and they had lots of lights up outside and you know what wonderful food Linda always cooks up. We were able to see Mindy's twins--they have been out of the hospital for about two weeks and are really doing well.

We then moved to our place for soup. Mom had made such an effort to get things ready and had made her famous cream of broccoli soup and some great bread sticks. I think we were all full at that point without going to Rick and Terry's for the main course. They have done a lot of work on their home with painting, and replacing the floor in the kitchen and dining area. There is such a sweet spirit with them and their children. We had beef kabobs, rice and salad.

Afterwards, we had German chocolate cake that Sue made and a sherbet with fruit in it that Terry made and played the white elephant gift exchange game. It was a wonderful time and one of the most special

times I have had for a birthday. The mellowing of age works miracles in family relationships if you really try to love each other and be kind and generous and don't hang on to offenses of the past.

Last week was a busy one with my work. I have been trying hard to see people every day in an attempt to raise enough endowment money to meet my critical objectives. One person I met with was the mother of a lady I met on the Jamboree. Her daughter had already primed her as to why I was coming and after a delightful visit she readily wrote out a check. She was Mrs. Joe Parkinson; her husband owned the John Deere and Caterpillar agency in Idaho Falls.

I've been recruiting my staff for Wood Badge. I have had some neat responses from the wonderful people I've talked to. There is something great in people that have a vision of eternity and recognize the significance of what we do to strengthen the delivery of values to noble youth of these latter days.

[Mom] I'm sure that by now all of you except our missionaries have heard the good news about Shaunnie and Randy's baby being born on December 3rd. They have known for some time that they had been selected but they were hesitant to make it known because of the situation that happened with the last baby they had been selected to adopt. It was such a disappointment when it fell through but doubly so when they knew that all of us were disappointed, too.

This time they kept mum about it until she was born and the mother signed the papers. That happened last Friday night and things seem to be moving ahead as planned. This week all the inter-state legal papers have to be completed and then they will be able to travel to where the baby is and bring her home with them. It's an exciting time.

We are grateful that their wait is nearly over. Shaunnie said that they hadn't selected a name yet. She is 8 lbs. 4 oz and has strawberry blonde hair. Hopefully things can be worked out at Shauntel's job so that she can devote the next few weeks to adjusting to her new role as "Mom". Her co-workers have been very good to accommodate the situation and her immediate supervisor is looking for a replacement for Shauntel so that she only has to work part-time for the balance of the year.

Randy has been gone a lot the last few weeks with interviews. Driving long hours in bad weather has worn him out. It's a good thing his schooling demands are reduced to accommodate this process of matching students to residency programs.

Last night we had the Larsen Christmas party and enjoyed the chance to see family. Daddy had a wonderful birthday and appreciated the cards and calls and gifts.

We wish we would get a letter from Paul. Usually we receive a photo of the missionary and the President and his wife on the day they arrive in the field, but we haven't even received that yet so we are feeling a little neglected. Our first concern is Paul and his health and well-being. Hopefully he will be able to receive our letters. We had heard that mail service to El Salvador is slow and unreliable so maybe this will be what we have to put up with for the two years he is there.

It's been nice to send Mike's letters and packages to Texas and know that they would arrive safe and sound. I remember one Christmas sending John's packages off in August and registering them just in case they didn't arrive. By February, I signed a complaint with the post office and started proceedings to get my money back because John never got the gifts. Finally in March, I received word that he had received the package. We ought to be

grateful for the wonderful service we get in this country.

December 16, 1997

[Dad] Where has December gone? It seems like it just got here and its half over already. Our home looks nice and "Christmasy" with the tree and spot decorations around and the lights up outside. It has been so cold the last few days that I've been glad I got the lights up while it was still relatively warm.

Things have been going well with my work and it looks like I should get a good evaluation again this year based on my achievements. One of the things I have done is make up a report that shows a comparison of what was in the endowment when I started and what has happened year by year. It is a pretty remarkable accounting of the generosity of faithful scouters and others who have made commitments to us in their wills or trusts.

It was good to be able to talk to many of you last week. I am always touched by the compassion, love, and concern you show for each other. As we are spread so far apart, I am truly grateful for Alexander Graham Bell's invention and the network of communications we are blessed with.

Last night was our annual council employee's Christmas party. It was a nice catered dinner. And then Santa came and had each of us sit on his knee and gave us a small gift. Then he handed out these neat stuffed Santa's with our bonus check attached. We then played a Christmas trivia game to see who got the small gifts that were part of the table decorations. It was a lot of fun and we ended up with a beautiful grape-stick Christmas wreath. My boss, Kim really knows how to put a good party together!

The ward party last week was also a huge success. We had over 200 there and Santa Claus was never mentioned. We all sat as families and things were kept under control. The program was excellent with the ward choir singing a couple numbers, the Young Women singing one, the Primary children singing several songs, and a couple special numbers--Kent Fife a solo, and Brent Romrell, Dwight Gardner, Cody Adams, and Tim and me singing a quartet.

Another special event of the past week was the Stake Choir Festival Sunday night. We had a choir from each ward in the stake--it was wonderful to see how these choirs have grown over the past few years since we started doing this each year. And then, all who chose to joined in singing the "Hallelujah" Chorus from Handel's Messiah. It was so powerful with all those voices drawn from the whole stake. It was really a thrill to be a part of that experience. Next week is the sing-a-long Messiah in Pocatello and I hope we are going to make it to that.

[Mom] This has been a very emotional week; "the best of times, the worst of times." On Thursday night we received a call from Jeff. Jonie had gone into labor and she was in the hospital in Bumidji. She wasn't due until February and was just a little further along than she was when she lost her last baby. Jeff said that they were being life-flighted to Fargo, North Dakota where they had excellent facilities and that he would keep us notified. On Friday morning Jonie called to announce that she had a three-pound baby boy and that he was doing well.

Although he was hooked up to an islet and needed help breathing and eating, the doctors were encouraged and felt like he would make it. Jeff returned to Cass Lake and Jonie stayed in Fargo for a few days. On the weekend, Jeff brought Sydney and Corey to see their new baby brother and Jonie returned with them to Cass Lake. Alex will stay in the hospital until the end of January but as soon as he is independent

of the machines, he will be transported to Bumidji where he will be closer to family.

We are so pleased that everything went well and that they had the kind of professional help that enabled them to save him. Jonie called yesterday and said that she was home and doing well, getting things ready for Christmas.

My thoughts have been with Shauntel and Randy this past week as the news of their situation reached us Friday. It didn't seem possible that all of their expectations were shattered. There have been tears shed and questions asked that seem to go unanswered for now. Mike and Paul haven't heard what happened and so I will rehearse things for them. On December 3rd a beautiful couple who were both converts to the church had a baby. Several months previous to this they had made the decision to give the baby up for adoption through Social Services. They selected Shauntel and Randy and even requested a face- to-face interview with them prior to the baby's birth. They were impressed with them and had a cordial visit. Following this interview, Randy and Shauntel had some questions for the case worker. Namely, why is this sweet young couple not marrying and keeping the baby? Has anyone counseled them regarding what is the right thing to do in a situation such as this where both the parents are old enough to marry and assume responsibility? Randy was concerned enough about these questions that he called the case worker and talked things over but was assured that the right decision had been made and they could move ahead with plans for the adoption.

On Friday, December fourth, the papers were signed and the baby was placed in a foster home until both states involved could complete the legal papers necessary. With everything in order, Shauntel and Randy felt like they could let the news out regarding the upcoming events. We joined our prayers with theirs in thanksgiving for this long awaited blessing! A name was selected and plans were made to go to Omaha to spend the weekend there visiting the baby. They were preparing to leave on Friday when the social worker called and indicated that there was a problem. He went on to explain that the birth mother had changed her mind and decided to keep the baby.

Apparently, following the signing of the adoption papers, the birth father had broken off the relationship with the mother, leaving her feeling alone and abandoned. The case worker in Omaha was not around to talk things through with her because he had gone to Utah to visit a little granddaughter who was in the hospital terminally ill. Without the counseling and support she needed, the birth mother hired a lawyer and contacted Social Services with her decision.

Although legally the baby was not hers, the only thing to do was to back away from the situation. When Shauntel phoned Friday afternoon with the news, I felt so sad and disappointed. It didn't seem possible that it was happening to them, again. After visiting with Shaunnie, I phoned my neighbor, Debbie Ellis, who has four adopted children and who works as a volunteer for Social Services. She said that it was unfortunate that the case worker had not been there to encourage and counsel the mother and that they usually will work with the birth mother for several weeks.

She also mentioned that in recent years the church's policy on how adoptions are handled has changed drastically and inherent in these changes is the risk of this kind of thing happening.

For example, when Debbie got her children, she wasn't notified until the baby was legally cleared and everything was finalized. Now the policy has changed and

the expectant parents can select from comprehensive files the couple they want to have as parents to their child, and even meet them prior to the birth. This procedure brings comfort to the natural parents and encourages them to put the baby up for adoption, but it alerts the adoptive parents in advance and then if it falls through, it becomes very traumatic.

It has been hard for all of us to accept what has happened and I know that this was why Shauntel and Randy hesitated letting us know what was going on until it was final. They knew we would all be disappointed along with them. But I would rather be disappointed than find out later that they were carrying this sorrow alone.

Brigham Young once said that life is like a wheel and that we have times when we are at the top of the wheel and times when we are at the bottom. Soon the wheel moves and the scenario changes. All of us will have opportunity to be in every spot on that wheel at some time or other and when we are on the top we can help lift the burden of those who are at the bottom.

Last Saturday Uncle Nate stopped to spend some time with us. It was a rare treat to have him here and to be able to visit intimately about our situations and children. I thought as he left, how dear he is to me and how much I have learned from him over the years.

He has a way of getting to the heart of the matter and focusing on what is really important. I admire him for the beautiful family he and Maureen have raised and marvel at their patience in the face of tremendous odds and hardships.

Several weeks ago when Tim was having a struggle, Shaunte! wrote him a sweet letter of encouragement and in it she mentioned that in the last few years as they have worked through their situation, the one underlying feeling that had been there was a feeling of love and support from the Lord. Even in their darkest hour, they knew the Lord heard their prayers and was mindful of them. I thought that was a beautiful testimony of the blessings that come as we meet our trials in faith and patience.

It's a thrill to finally be getting news from Paul and to have two missionaries writing us. Hopefully we will be able to orchestrate their Christmas phone calls and do it while we have Steve and Bonnie and Becky and Chet here for our family party on Tuesday. We are still planning on visiting my folks and Stephani and Linds following Christmas. We are pleased that David and Andrea will host Shauntel and Randy and that everyone will have a touch of family.

December 22, 1997

[Mom] I've spent today finishing up a few things for Christmas. I'm excited to get Steve and Bonnie here for a couple of days and find out about their Illinois experience. Tomorrow night Becky and Chet will join us for a Christmas dinner and celebration and then they will be going to Utah to spend the holiday with Chet's folks. Steve and Bonnie are leaving Wednesday to go to Idaho Falls to be with her family for Christmas. We will open gifts on Christmas morning and then leave for Salt Lake and spend some time with Grandpa and Grandma Richards before leaving for California on Friday. We are excited to be with Steph and Linds and see their new home. Hopefully we can take in some of the sights while we are there.

Last week was full of the usual programs and festivities that attend the season. Last night we decorated sugar cookies and made deliveries to our neighbors and friends. I've made candy again this year and am feeling a little more confident with it than last year. My neighbor Melanie wasn't able to help me because she has had so much sickness in their family. It's been a little intimidating doing it alone, but

most of it has worked out and I've been pleased with the results.

My thoughts have been on Mike and Paul. I've hoped that they will have a memorable Christmas. It's hard to believe that Mike will be home in four months. His friends are starting to get home. I need to get his paper work done for his admittance to BYU.

[Dad] This is my last work day this year and I have about a weeks' worth of work to do-- Trails, grants, phone calls, finish up details on gifts and recognitions, etc. I'll probably have some spill-over to tomorrow, even though it is supposed to be a day off.

Last Friday, I took Sue to a Rotary Christmas party in Pocatello at the Westside Players. It was a dinner followed by a series of scenes by some excellent actors. It was a lot of fun.

We had a good time doing our deliveries on Sunday night. That did more to help me get in the Christmas spirit than anything. It was fun to be able to give a pecan log and dried apples to Gary and Rick and their families.

Sunday, we had our choir Christmas program. We filled all the choir seats and then some and had such a full, beautiful sound! SaraKay was in a small select group of girls that sang several numbers that really added to program as well. One of the most poignant elements of the program was a song that Kent Fife sang about the Savior-- something about: from swaddling rags to crimson robe.

Sure do think about our missionaries a lot and hope that they are having a joyful Christmas time. When I spoke with Dad last he talked about a neighbor that had some lights on a bush outside that looked like a jalapeno--Christmas is different in Arizona. I'm sure it is different in Mexico and El Salvador as well--but the true spirit of Christmas can't help but be felt, especially by missionaries that are sacrificing to be on the Lord's errand.
Love, DAD